

Paul's Pentecost

by Smith Wigglesworth

Smith Wigglesworth's sermon highlights the transformative power of God's grace and the necessity of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers, using Saul's conversion as a key example.

Scripture: Acts 9:1

Topics: "Grace", "Holy Spirit Baptism"

Description

Smith Wigglesworth preaches about the transformative power of God's grace as demonstrated in the life of Saul, the notorious persecutor of Christians. He emphasizes that God chose to show mercy rather than judgment, leading to Saul's dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus. Wigglesworth highlights the importance of the Holy Spirit's baptism, which empowers believers to live a life filled with God's presence and purpose. He shares personal testimonies of healing and revival, illustrating that God's grace is sufficient for even the most wretched of sinners. Ultimately, he calls for believers to seek the same infilling of the Holy Spirit that Saul received, encouraging a life of continual spiritual growth and empowerment.

Transcript

Read Acts 9:1-22.

Saul was probably the greatest persecutor that the early Christians had. We read that he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison. At this time we find him breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. He was on his way to Damascus for the purpose of destroying the church there. How did God deal with such a one? We should have dealt with him in judgment. God dealt with him in mercy. Oh, the wondrous love of God! He loved the saints at Damascus and the way He preserved them was through the salvation of the man who purposed to scatter and destroy them. Our God delights to be merciful and His grace is vouchsafed daily to both sinner and saint. He shows mercy to all. If we would but realize it, we are only alive today through the grace of our God.

More and more I see that it is through the grace of God that I am preserved every day. It is when we realize the goodness of God that we are brought to repentance. Here was Saul, with letters from the high priest, hastening to Damascus. He was struck down and there came to his vision a light, a light that was brighter than the sun. As he fell speechless to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" He answered, "Who art thou, Lord?" And the answer came back, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." And he cried, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" And the men that were with

him lost their speech -- they were speechless -- but they led him to Damascus.

There are some people who have an idea that it is only preachers who can know the will of God. But the Lord has a disciple in Damascus, a man behind the scenes, who lived in a place where God could talk to him. His ears were open. He was one who listened in to the things from heaven. Oh, this is so much more marvelous than anything you can hear on earth. It was to this man that the Lord appeared in a vision. He told him to go down to the street called Straight and inquire for Saul. And He told him that Saul had seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him that he might receive his sight. Ananias protested, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to Thy saints in Jerusalem: and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on Thy name." But the Lord assured Ananias that Saul was a chosen vessel, and Ananias, nothing doubting, went on his errand of mercy.

The Lord had told Ananias concerning Saul, "Behold, he prayeth." Repentant prayer is always heard in heaven. The Lord never despises a broken and contrite heart. And to Saul was given this vision that was soon to be a reality, the vision of Ananias coming to pray for him that he might receive his sight.

As I was looking through my letters one day while in the city of Belfast, a man came up to me and said, "Are you visiting the sick?" He pointed me to go to a certain house and told me to go to it and there I would see a very sick woman. I went to the house and I saw a very helpless woman propped up in bed. I knew that humanly speaking she was beyond all help. She was breathing with short, sharp breaths as if every breath would be her last. I cried to the Lord and said, "Lord, tell me what to do." The Lord said to me, "Read the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah." I opened my Bible and did as I was told. I read down to the fifth verse of this chapter, when all of a sudden the woman shouted, "I am healed! I am healed!" I was amazed at this sudden exclamation and asked her to tell me what had happened. She said, "Two weeks ago I was cleaning house and I strained my heart very badly. Two physicians have been to see me, but they both told me there was no help. But last night the Lord gave me a vision. I saw you come right into my bedroom. I saw you praying. I saw you open your Bible at the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. When you got down to the fifth verse and read the words, 'With His stripes we are healed,' I saw myself wonderfully healed. That was a vision, now it is a fact."

I do thank God that visions have not ceased. The Holy Ghost can give visions, and we may expect them in these last days. God willeth not the death of any sinner and He will use all kinds of means for their salvation. Oh, what a gospel of love!

Ananias went down to the house on Straight Street and he laid his hands on the one who had before been a blasphemer and a persecutor and he said to him, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." The Lord had not forgotten his physical condition and there was healing for him. But there was something beyond this. It was the filling with the Holy Ghost. Oh, it always seems to me that the Gospel is robbed of its divine glory when we overlook this marvelous truth of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. To be saved is wonderful, to be a new creature, to have passed from death unto life, to have the witness of the Spirit that you are born of God, all this is unspeakably precious. But whereas we have the well of salvation bubbling up, we need to go on to a place where from within us shall flow rivers of living water.

God chose Saul. What was he? A blasphemer. A persecutor. That is grace. Our God is gracious and He loves to show His mercy to the vilest and worst of men. There was a notable character in the town in which I lived who was known as the worst man in the town. He was so vile, and his language was so horrible, that even wicked men could not stand it. In England they have what is known as the public hangman who has to perform all the executions. This man held that appointment and he told me later that he believed that when he performed the execution of men who had committed murder, that the demon power that was in them would come upon him and that in consequence he was possessed with a legion of demons. His life was so miserable that he purposed to make an end of life. He went down to a certain depot and purchased a ticket. The English trains are much different from the American. In every coach there are a number of small compartments and it is easy for anyone who wants to commit suicide to open the door of his compartment and throw himself out of the train. This man purposed to throw himself out of the train in a certain tunnel just as the train coming from an opposite direction would be about to dash past and he thought this would be a quick end to his life.

There was a young man at the depot that night who had been saved the night before. He was all on fire to get others saved and purposed in his heart that every day of his life he would get someone saved. He saw this dejected hangman and began to speak to him about his soul. He brought him down to our mission and there he came under a mighty conviction of sin. For two and a half hours he was literally sweating under conviction and you could see a vapor rising up from him. At the end of two and a half hours he was graciously saved.

I said, "Lord, tell me what to do." The Lord said, "Don't leave him, go home with him." I went to his house. When he saw his wife he said, "God has saved me." The wife broke down and she too was graciously saved. I tell you there was a difference in that home. Even the cat knew the difference.

There were two sons in that house and one of them said to his mother, "Mother, what is up in our house? It was never like this before. It is so peaceful. What is it?" She told him, "Father has been saved." The other son was struck with the same thing.

I took this man to many special services and the power of God was on him for many days. He would give his testimony and as he grew in grace he desired to preach the gospel. He became an evangelist and hundreds and hundreds were brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ through his ministry. The grace of God is sufficient for the vilest and He can take the most wicked of men and make them monuments of his grace. He did this with Saul of Tarsus at the very time he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. He did it with Berry the hangman. He will do it for hundreds more in response to our cries.

You will notice that when Ananias came into that house he called the one-time enemy of the gospel "Brother Saul." The Lord Jesus has sent Ananias to that house to put his hands upon this newly saved brother that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost. You say, "But it does not say that he spoke in tongues." We know that Paul did speak in tongues; that he spoke in tongues more than all the Corinthians. In those early days they were so near the time of that first Pentecostal outpouring that they would never have been satisfied with anyone receiving the Baptism unless they received it according to the original pattern given on the Day of Pentecost. When Peter was relating what took place in the house of Cornelius at Caesarea he said, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning." Later, speaking of this incident, he said, "God, which knoweth the hearts, bear them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying

their hearts by faith." And we know from the account of what took place at Cornelius' household that when the Holy Ghost fell "they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God." Many people think that God does make a difference between us and those at the beginning. But they have no Scripture for this. When anyone receives the gift of the Holy Ghost, there will assuredly be no difference between his experience today and that which was given on the Day of Pentecost. And I cannot believe that, when Saul was filled with the Holy Ghost the Lord made any difference in the experience that He gave him from the experience that He had given to Peter and the rest a short while before.

It was about thirty-one years ago that a man came to me and said, "Wigglesworth, do you know what is happening in Sunderland? People are being baptized in the Holy Ghost exactly the same way as the disciples were on the Day of Pentecost." I said, "I would like to go." I immediately took train and went to Sunderland. I went to the meetings and said, "I want to hear these tongues." I was told, "When you receive the Baptism in the Holy Ghost, you will speak in tongues." I said, "I have the Baptism in the Holy Ghost." One man said, "Brother, when I received the Baptism I spoke in tongues." I said, "Let's hear you." He could not speak in tongues to order, he could only speak as the Spirit gave him utterance and so my curiosity was not satisfied.

I saw these people were very earnest and I became quite hungry. I was anxious to see this new manifestation of the Spirit and I would be questioning all the time and spoiling a lot of the meetings. One man said to me, "I am a missionary and I have come here to seek the Baptism in the Holy Ghost. I am waiting on the Lord, but you have come in and are spoiling everything with your questions." I began to argue with him and our love became so hot that when we walked home he walked on one side of the road and I on the other.

That night there was to be a tarrying meeting and I purposed to go. I changed my clothes and left my key in the clothes I had taken off. As we came from the meeting in the middle of the night I found I did not have my key upon me and this missionary brother said, "You will have to come and sleep with me." But do you think we went to bed that night? Oh, no, we spent the night in prayer. We received a precious shower from above. The breakfast bell rang, but that was nothing to me. For four days I wanted nothing but God. If you only knew the unspeakably wonderful blessings of being filled with the Third Person of the Trinity, you would set aside everything else to tarry for this infilling.

I was about to leave Sunderland. This revival was taking place in the vestry of an Episcopal Church. I went to the Vicarage that day to say goodbye and I said to Sister Boddy, the vicar's wife, "I am going away, but I have not received the tongues yet." She said, "It isn't tongues you need, but the Baptism." I said, "I have the Baptism, Sister, but I would like to have you lay hands on me before I leave." She laid her hands on me and then had to go out of the room. The fire fell. It was a wonderful time as I was there with God alone. It seemed as though God bathed me in power. I was given a wonderful vision. I was conscious of the cleansing of the precious blood and cried out, "Clean! Clean! Clean!" I was filled with the joy of the consciousness of the cleansing. I saw the Lord Jesus Christ. I saw the empty cross and I saw Him exalted at the right hand of God the Father. As I was extolling, magnifying, and praising Him I was speaking in tongues as the Spirit of God gave me utterance. I knew now that I had received the real Baptism in the Holy Ghost.

I sent a telegram home and when I got there one of our boys said, "Father, I hear you have been speaking in tongues. Let's hear you." I could not speak in tongues. I had been moved to speak in tongues as the Spirit of God gave utterance at the moment I received the Baptism, but I did not receive the gift of tongues

and could not speak a word. I never spoke again in tongues until nine months later when I was praying for someone, and it was then that God gave me the permanent gift of speaking in tongues.

And so Saul was filled with the Holy Ghost and in the later chapters of the Acts of the Apostles we see the result of this infilling. Oh, what a difference it makes. When I got home my wife said to me, "So you think you have received the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. Why, I am as much baptized in the Holy Ghost as you are." We had sat on the platform together for twenty years but that night she said, "Tonight you will go by yourself." I said, "All right." As I went up to the platform that night the Lord gave me the first few verses of the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." My wife went back to one of the furthest seats in the hall and she said to herself, "I will watch it." I preached that night on the subject the Lord had given me and I told what the Lord had done for me. I told the people that I was going to have God in my life and I would gladly suffer a thousand deaths rather than forfeit this wonderful infilling that had come to me. My wife was very restless. She was moved in a new way and said, "That is not my Smith that is preaching. Lord, you have done something for him." As soon as I had finished, the secretary of the mission got up and said, "Brethren, I want what the leader of our mission has got." He tried to sit down but missed his seat and fell on the floor. There were soon fourteen of them on the floor, my own wife included. We did not know what to do, but the Holy Ghost got hold of the situation and the fire fell. A revival started and the crowds came. It was only the beginning of the flood-tide of blessing. We had touched the reservoir of the Lord's life and power. Since that time the Lord has taken me to many different lands and I have witnessed many blessed outpourings of God's Holy Spirit.

The grace of God that was given to the persecuting Saul is available for you. The same Holy Ghost infilling he received is likewise available. Do not rest satisfied with any lesser experience than the Baptism that the disciples received on the Day of Pentecost, then move on to a life of continuous receiving of more and more of the blessed Spirit of God.

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