

# Abiding Elements of Pentecost

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My topic tonight is the abiding element in Pentecost, and I want to read from the Book of Acts, Chapter 2. A very familiar passage, a very controversial passage, but I don't intend to treat it controversially. Second chapter of Acts, when the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire and sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem, Jews, devout men out of every nation unto heaven.

Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together and were confounded because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilean, so how hear we every man in our own tongue, for in we were born? Then skipping over the list of seventeen nations to verse 11, they said, we do hear them speak in our languages, the wonderful works of God.

Now here in this experience, as in every, or almost every, probably every valid religious experience, there are these elements present. There is first the external element, and because it is external it is variable. Then there is the internal element, which is of the Spirit, and so tremendously important. And then there is the incidental elements, which are of relative importance. And the fundamental elements, which are vital and eternal.

Now I want you to bring this analysis to what took place here on that day called "the Fifty Days," Pentecost, and I want to point out some things that can never be repeated, although my sermon, I'll break it down and toss it out to tell you in case I don't finish it, you'll know what I started to say. There are elements which can never be repeated, and some which, according to my knowledge of history, never have been repeated. And then there are elements which are eternal, and while they are not repeated, they are perpetuated. For I'd like to say this, that I do not believe in the repetition of Pentecost, but I believe in the perpetuation of Pentecost.

Now, what can never be repeated? Well, the physical presence of all the Church in one place. The members remained together in Jerusalem. They were all there and that never happened after that, because Saul made havoc of the church, and they were scattered abroad. And they have never been all together since. I started to say, thank God, I mean by that, that there are so many of them that there's no building and no town that could house them, so many of the people of God. So that could never be repeated. You never can get all God's people together outside of heaven, and that in itself may be a blessing.

Now, the second thing is that there are elements, there are things that occurred here that, in addition to one I've named, that never have been repeated, according to my knowledge of Church history.

A friend of mine said to me one time, when I get up and talk at conference, why don't they listen to me? He said, because you have a habit of speaking *ex cathedra*, and sometimes there's more *ex* than *cathedra*.

So, it is entirely possible that I could be wrong here, though I never am deliberately so, but what has never been repeated, so far as I know, is the sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind. Now, I've never heard that that happened. I've heard all sorts of things that were supposed to take place, but nobody ever said the whole house was full of a sound like wind.

Then I have never heard that the appearance of a great body of fire was seen by a company of people, dividing itself into flames like little tongues and resting upon the foreheads of each one. That seemed to be peculiar to that first coming of the Holy Ghost.

Then I have never heard that they all began, all the company present, began to speak languages which did not need to be interpreted, but which were understood by everybody present. Seventeen different languages of people there, and they understood it without an interpreter.

Now there's a good logic back of all this, my friends. If these things had been necessary to the life of the Church, then they would have had to be repeated every time the Spirit filled anybody, or there was a company of people that was Spirit-filled. The Church couldn't have continued without them. But if they were never repeated, then the Church must have ceased the day it was born, or at least ceased when the one who first composed the Church died.

Now those are the passing elements, the noise, the wind, the presence of everybody in one place, the sudden visitation of God in fire, visible fire that separated and sat visibly upon them, the out bursting of a joyous testimony in languages that couldn't be understood by everybody without an interpreter. Now all this was there, but this is not the abiding element in this Pentecostal visitation.

What was, or what were the abiding elements? Well, we can discover them by going to the New Testament and finding what the Lord had promised that would come. He said, He shall send you another Comforter. And He said, when the Comforter is come, He will take the things of mine and will show them unto you. And He said, I tell you the truth, that I go away, and I send Him, and when He comes will convince the world of sin and righteousness and judgment.

And He said that ye shall receive power, and as every student knows, power means a moral ability to do. Now that, those are the vital elements in the Pentecostal outpouring, and these have been perpetuated to the Church and are ours, available to us as certainly as to them.

Now I want to illustrate this thing by showing you how when our Lord came there were certain phenomena which occurred, but which were never repeated in the ministry of our Lord.

You remember when Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the days of Herod the King, there came wise men from the east, and there was a star, and there were angels that chanted over the fields of Bethlehem, and there were the wise men, and there was the inn where the Lord was born, and the excitement, and later on the flight into Egypt.

Now, all these were external phenomena which surrounded the birth of the Lord Jesus, but they all passed because they were incidental and not fundamental, they were external and not internal, they were visible and audible and of the flesh, and not the invisible and inaudible deep workings of the Holy Ghost. There was a star out there, and there were angels, and there were wise men, and there was the inn, and there were donkeys, and there was the flight into Egypt, and all that.

But when all that was gone, the Lord Jesus Christ was still there, because the abiding element in Bethlehem was the presence of the Word to become flesh to dwell among us. After the wise men had gone back east again, and the shepherds had gone back to their flocks, and the star had gone wherever it went, and the inn had been forgotten, and the flight into Egypt was a memory, He was still there. He abode. He remained, and all that He came to do was perpetuated through his entire ministry and still continues.

That is an illustration, and I believe a valid one, of how it was when the Holy Ghost, the third person of the Trinity, came at Pentecost as the second person had come at Bethlehem. There were external and dramatic, colorful phenomena that surrounded the coming of the Holy Spirit, as there had been surrounding the birth of Christ. But when those external phenomena passed, the thing that God had wanted to do and had succeeded in doing, still abodes, still remains forever the same.

Now, what did God do there, as recorded in that passage which I read to you? Well, the Holy Ghost had come to dwell among men and had come to dwell in the hearts of His people to make His Church one and to forever inhabit the redeemed bosoms of those who believed on God's eternal Son. Wouldn't it have been a ridiculous thing if the people had heard about the phenomena that surrounded the birth of Jesus, and nobody would have believed that he was healed unless there was a star and a donkey and a hymn and a wise man and all of the external things?

The point is, God used all those things to get His eternal Son into human flesh, to get Him here. That was God incarnating His Son, and these things were external manifestations. But they all passed, and the Lord remained and healed the sick and gave eyes to the blind and unstopped the ears and drove out the devils and forgave sin and blessed mankind.

Now the Holy Ghost came as the Second Person came, and He came upon them in visible fire. He sat upon their foreheads; they broke out into languages that could be understood without an interpreter. It was a wind, or like a wind, that filled the building. But those, I repeat, were the external elements. The eternal element was that the Holy

Ghost had come, the Comforter has come, we sing, and that's what had happened there. That was the mighty truth.

Now, the meaning of it all is that the Holy Ghost now inhabits His Church in power. I'd like to point out that the word power there is ability, and it's the ability to be and ability to do.

All the religions of the world that I know anything about, and I have made myself acquainted by reading the holy books, so-called, of most of the great religions of the world, and never could quite wade through the Book of Mormon. That was always a little too heavy for me, I began to nod about page 3. But most of the great religions of the East, I have read at least some of their books, and they are practically all the same in that they talk about what you do and don't have very much to say about what you be. But the Scriptures talk about our being first and our doing second, and we do what we be.

Back in Pennsylvania where I grew up, they used the word be for do, and it's a good word, it's the verb I be, I am. God says that He was to give us ability to be, and because we have ability to be, of course it's quite normal that we do. A bird has ability to sing because he's a bird, and a Christian has ability to live like a Christian because He is a Christian. God has given him the power.

I want to analyze the power a little bit. We're suffering in the day in which we live from two extremes. We're suffering from the extremes of those who take the external phenomena of Pentecost and try to repeat it 19th centuries later, and nothing but trouble can come from this and nothing but trouble ever has; divisions and all sorts of things.

And then we're suffering from another extreme just as bad, and that is that we've all gone into our holes and frozen over the entrance and sit back there blowing on our hands, afraid of the Holy Spirit. We're afraid to preach about him and talk about him and pray to be filled with him, because some have gone to extremes.

They have misunderstood and they thought that the wise man and the star and the shepherds and the inn and we have to have all that. No. I don't believe on a star to be converted. I don't believe on a shepherd to be saved. I don't believe on an inn or a donkey in order to be blessed. I believe on the One who came into the middle of all that and remains in mortal flesh.

So, I don't believe on tongues, and I don't believe on flaming fire on foreheads. I don't believe on winds that fill buildings. I believe on Jesus Christ, and I receive the one who came in that hurricane of blessing to remain forever in the breasts of his people.

Now, I don't hear any amens, but I love my own preaching, you know, I do. I enjoy preaching the truth, and if anybody says amen, he's on, it's all right. And if he doesn't say amen, he's either asleep or else he's wrong.

Let's break this down a little bit, keeping within our time. What is this power to be and this power to do? Well, there's love, joy, peace. We talk about love. A fellow like I am, I

couldn't love anybody. Now, Stephen Olford, who will follow me, he could love anybody. He was born that way. He's a lovable fellow, but nobody loves me for myself because there's nothing here to love. And I couldn't love anybody. But God gives you power to be and to do, and He gives me power. He can give me power to love people that just aren't lovable.

And then there's joy. Now, a fellow like I am, again I'm born gloomy. I see the dark side of everything. My friend McAfee, if you're here, knows that. And if it is clear as a bell in the morning, I say that's probably a weather breeder, it likely to rain by noon. I'm naturally pessimistic. And for me to have anything like joy and peace takes a power that isn't in human nature, at least it isn't in mine. But I enjoy quite a little bit of peace and joy because I have been given ability to be and ability to do.

Then there's long-suffering. Now, long-suffering, of course, is the ability to suffer a long time. Everybody's willing to suffer a little while but suffering a long time just to put up with things and ride them out and live them down and hope for the best and go on, it's not natural, it's not natural to me. I don't think it's natural to any American, really.

A Chinese person might because they're a very quiet, slower people, but an American wouldn't. And an American complains if he misses one section of a revolving door. So long-suffering, it takes something out of heaven to make a man suffer long and be kind, a disposition to bear injuries patiently.

Then there's gentleness, which is the opposite of harshness and severity. Then there's goodness. Now, I'm quoting, of course, from Galatians. There's goodness, which is morally good. Now, here again we're a victim of extremes because none is good save God. We're unwilling to say he was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost. We're afraid of the Bible itself. We run and hide from the words of the Scripture. We say nobody is good, nobody is good.

A friend of mine preached one time on righteousness. He preached that people ought to be righteous, and an old fellow came down the aisle walking fast, and he said, why do you preach goodness? Don't you know there's only one good and that's God? You're preaching legalism. He said, people can't be good, they aren't good.

This dear old brother was hurt so badly by the criticism, and I called him aside and I said, don't worry, Doctor, God has his treasures in earthen vessels and some of the vessels are cracked. Don't let it bother you at all. Some people are afraid of goodness, just sheer downright goodness.

Do you want me to say a radical thing? If all of you listening to me now were just ordinary, plain, downright good people, your testimony would be stepped up a hundred percent. Goodness is a virtue given by God to the human heart.

Then faithfulness, that's ability to keep right on being faithful, opposite of instability, fidelity to a trust. And meekness, which is the opposite of arrogance and temperance, which is the opposite of intemperance.

I had hoped I might be able, while I'm here, to preach on discipleship, but it didn't fall in the scheme of things that I should. But I believe that the Lord wants us to be disciples and learn from him and learn by the power of the indwelling Holy Ghost. He gives the power, and we give the willingness and the determination to be Christlike, and temperance is one of the virtues, living temperately, to be strong and masterful in control of ourselves.

Now, the will of God for us is that we should have all these virtues, that is, this power which God offered, this power which the Holy Ghost brought, this power which the Holy Ghost is. For I'd like to make it very clear that God never gives anything away. When God gives, He still retains what He has given, and He gives Himself along with His gifts.

It would be a tragedy from the highest, farthest out celestial body down to Moody Church; it would be a moral tragedy that would be vast and cosmic if God should shuffle off gifts and throw them to his people like Rockefeller used to throw dimes. Never does God separate the gift from Himself.

When God gives you a gift, He gives you Himself. When God gave us these precious virtues, He gave us the Holy Ghost who brought these virtues to us, and so it is the indwelling Holy Spirit that brings these virtues.

Don't think for a minute tonight that I've read the Keswick program and that I'm preaching this because Keswick believes it. I preached this before Keswick ever reached Chicago. I preached it for years and continue to preach it because I believe it's biblical, that it's the indwelling Holy Ghost who came at Pentecost and enables all of His people in whom He dwells to be virtuous, to have love and joy and peace and gentleness and goodness and faithfulness and meekness and temperance. I believe that this is the secret of godliness and the secret of the victorious life.

Now this, I say, can only be done by divine indwelling. It's impossible that this should ever be given to us from the outside. You can't take a gorilla and put up a sign and say, Be human. In the first place, he couldn't read. In the second place, if he did read, he wouldn't know how to go about it. How could a gorilla be human? He can't. He belongs to another world of life. He's not. He can't be human.

And so, you can't say to a sinner, Be holy. That's an impossibility.

A sinner can't be holy any more than that gorilla can be a man. But if we had the power to say to the gorilla, I can extract the spirit of a good man from him and I can fill you with him, that would take care of the gorilla. Just as soon as the spirit of a good man entered the gorilla, say the spirit of Eisenhower entered the gorilla, he'd be a kindly gentleman and a man you're proud of when he stands up. He'd be a man.

But as long as you can't give the Spirit, the power to be and to do, you'll still be a gorilla. You can put a bib on around him and put pants on him and teach him to eat with a knife and a fork. But when he begets his kind, they'll be little gorillas. And he'll be a gorilla until he dies. And when he dies, you're putting him down in a gorilla grave, because gorilla he is, gorilla he'll be forever, as long as gorillas last.

And I say now, my friend, you can't take a sinner, no matter how well he's an educated sinner. A Ph.D., for instance, a Ph.D., that's a Doctor of Philosophy. You take a Doctor of Philosophy and say to him, Be holy, be Christlike, and he'll look at you and he'll be nice and friendly, because he's educated, but he won't know what to do. He just won't know what to do, and it's impossible that he would know what to do.

The flesh of Adam can't produce holiness. The flesh of Adam cannot produce love and joy and peace and longsuffering and gentleness. It can produce all sorts of imitations and write books and sell books. And if you write a book on how to be loved and have longsuffering and gentleness and be good, you can sell them by the millions; people want to know.

But nobody has ever been able to produce Christ's character in Adam's flesh. The nearest thing is Stoicism, I suppose. I've been a great lover of the Stoics. But some people think the "stoic" is the bird that brings the baby. But they said the Stoic. But the Stoic was an old philosopher. But it's no use, brother, you can't do it. All it did was make zombies out of them. And they walked around hard and stiff.

When Socrates was dying in the prison at Athens of hemlock, they brought his wife in. She came in sniffing, and he didn't even kiss her good-bye, he said, take her away. He was in control of himself, it was self-control, and they controlled themselves by becoming as stiff as icicles and just as unattractive and as cold.

And then there's the contemplative religions of the East. You hear a lot about it now, Zen Buddhism and Yoga. Don't waste a dime on it, but you hear a lot about it. But they haven't done anything for anybody much, really. And if anybody does get any help from them, it's because they're pretty good people to start with. You know, as Adam counts people good.

But the fruits of the Spirit are only the fruits of the Holy Spirit and cannot possibly grow in unblessed, uncleaned and unfilled and unregenerated human nature.

So, most Christians, I think, and most Christianity; it's only Adam at his best, really. You go to the average church now, even good churches, and it's just Adam at his best. Everybody comes dressed up, looking out over his collar with a narrow tie on. And he looks all right, and he smiles and bobs his head, but you don't know what he'd been doing the week before. He's not necessarily a holy man because he's in church. But as for being holy, that's another matter.

When Pentecost was fully come, the Holy Ghost came into human nature to make people holy and to keep them holy, that they might live holy lives and reproduce in human beings the character that had been and is in Christ. That's the abiding element in Pentecost.

It is not to be repeated, it is to be perpetuated. It is to be carried on from generation to generation, but we must tell the truth to the people and not let them down. Some people don't believe in the Holy Ghost, nor believe they ever ought to be filled with the Holy Ghost at all. Some people say it's just an ideal. He is not an ideal. No, no.

He's no more an ideal now than Christ was an ideal when He walked around on earth. He was born in that dramatic setting, but when the dramatic setting was passed, He was still there healing the sick and raising the dead. The Holy Ghost came in that dramatic setting at Pentecost, but when the dramatic setting passed, He still remained and still remains, and He's here now.

All He needs and wants is that His people should want Him bad enough and that they should yield to Him and let Him have His way, and He will reproduce all the essential spiritual and everlasting elements in us now that He produced on that historic day of Pentecost.