

"SPREADING THE REVIVAL"

Text: Acts 4:13

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Isn't it wonderful to experience a divine disturbance? During these days of 'Revival we have known the experience of a divine disturbance. I think that we can all agree that we have felt something of the thrill of a Pentecostal outpouring of blessing upon our church.

Pentecost has been called "the divine disturbance." Crowds of people were gathered in Jerusalem. Whenever you see a crowd, you can look for a disturbance of one kind or another. We have known recently in America "demonstration disturbances". We always face them fearfully because "When a crowd gets together, violence can break out.

Pentecost was the time when God used human instruments as channels' for His power. On the Day of Pentecost, God's people were drawn together by a common devotion. They were men and women of many differences. But one thing they had in common. They all loved Jesus! As the Spirit of God came upon them, they began to tell what Christ meant to them. How amazing was the effect. People listened to them, scarcely believing their ears.

A miraculous revival broke out in old Jerusalem. On the day of Pentecost 3000 souls were saved. A few days later another 5000 were saved. Still more conversions as multitudes turned to Christ. So great was the power of that Revival that even the enemies of the cause of Christ had to admit that something was spreading and they would have to take steps to stop the spread of the Gospel.

What a wonderful Revival we have had. How God has visited our church with power. Lives have been changed, homes have been transformed souls have been saved, and Christians have been strengthened. My concern now is this: How can we spread this Revival?

The Revival found in the second chapter of the Book of Acts continued into chapter 3, with the healing of the lame man. The Revival is still on in chapter 4. When Peter and John were imprisoned, it was because their enemies knew that the Spirit of God was still working, and they felt that the only way to stop the Revival would be to imprison some of the leaders. How I wish that our study of the Word of God, our effective praying, and our holiness in living and in witnessing might spread until our enemies would have to say: "That it spread no further among the people, let us straightly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name." (Acts 4: 17.)

As we turn back to the Book of the Acts, perhaps we can find some suggestions as to how we can spread out the Revival. Let me suggest three things that stand out in my mind after a study of the early chapters of Acts:

**THE PLACE AND PROMINENCE OF THE SAVIOUR
THE PLACE AND PROMINENCE OF THE SPIRIT
THE PLACE AND PROMINENCE OF THE SHARING**

I. WE CAN SPREAD THE REVIVAL BY THE PLACE AND PROMINENCE WE GIVE TO THE SAVIOUR.

A Revival always comes when we learn the secret of Acts 4:13. "They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus . A Revival, whether it be prayer, praise, or preaching, is the manifestation of the power of Christ.

Men and women need to be brought to the place where they realize the need for an answer to the question that Pilate faced: "What shall I do then with Jesus, which is called the Christ?" Jesus is still the main issue of life~ even as it was when he was here on this earth. Throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus never received a neutral response. Men were either antagonized by him or they were attracted to him. Men were either driven away from Him or they were drawn to Him. In Pilate we see the drama of every man. Pilate little dreamed that he was asking the most important question that life can offer. Indeed, I feel that the whole reason for our earthly pilgrimage is that we may give an answer to this question. We shall continue to have a Revival if we will confront men with the question: What is your decision with regard to Christ? We are not asking men what they think of Baptists, not what they think of the church, not what they think of Baptism, but what they think of Christ.

There are only two alternatives: Receive him or reject him. We may try to ignore him, but we must never forget that indifference is a more cruel slur than outright opposition. We may try to postpone our decision, but in the final analysis, until we receive him, we reject him. And every rejection is a fresh crucifixion of Christ. On the day of Pentecost there were men and women who had the courage to stand up for Jesus. How great was their courage. Someone has pointed out that there are two kinds of courage. There is the reckless courage, which scarcely considers the dangers that are faced. But there is also the realized courage, the kind of courage that realizes the dangers that are involved. Are you willing to stand up for Jesus even if it costs you your life? Are you willing to speak up for Christ, even though it may cost you your job? Are you willing to be true to Christ, even if your whole family turns against you?

Peter presented Christ the Savior as the only hope for a crooked generation. When he said: Save yourselves from this untoward generation (Acts 2:40), he was saying in brief, precise language: Save yourselves from this crooked generation.

When we say that a generation is crooked, we do not mean that every- one in it is a crook. But it means that the direction of that generation is crooked. In general, it is moving toward death. There is something wrong with our generation. There is something wrong with our political system. There is something wrong in the relation between capital and labor. There is something wrong with education. If anyone had told me ten years ago that our public school system would come to the time when we didn't know who would be teaching in our schools, and whether our schools would remain open or be closed, I would have thought he was crazy. Look

at science. With all of man's skill and ingenuity, we now can offer to man the means whereby he can destroy himself. There is something wrong with art. With so much potential for beauty and loveliness, look at today's emphasis on the sordid and the perverse. Look at the family. Men and women who pose as authorities on the home let their sordid lives threaten the very foundations of the home.

Then Peter proceeded to preach Jesus. What a sermon he preached. THE INTERPRETER'S BIBLE suggests five points.

- 1. What Jesus did.** "By the power of God he did miracles and wonders and signs.
- 2. What you did.** "Ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain him."
- 3. What God did.** "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death."
- 4. What we are doing now.** "Whereof we all are witnesses." We are witnessing to what God in Christ has done for us.
- 5. What you can do.** When they cried out, "Men and brethren what shall we do?", Peter answered: Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ."

It seems crystal clear that the first step in spreading the Revival is to give to the Savior of the world the place and the prominence He must have.

II. WE CAN SPREAD THE REVIVAL BY. GIVING THE SPIRIT THE PLACE AND PROMINENCE HE MUST HAVE.

I am indebted to Stephen Olford for this emphasis. To Dr. Olford the Book of the Acts is the story of a spreading Revival because of "the life of the Spirit." He suggests three things that stand out:

1-The fullness of the Spirit

2-The freedom of the Spirit

3-The fellowship of the Spirit

The fullness of the spirit is suggested by Acts 4:31 "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Revival always comes when men are filled with the Holy Ghost. Peter could never have delivered that mighty sermon if he had not been filled with the Spirit. Stephen was so full of the Holy Ghost that he was willing to suffer and die for Christ. If we are to spread the Revival, this preacher must be filled with the Holy Spirit. Every deacon must be filled with the Spirit. Every Sunday School officer and teacher must be filled with the Spirit.

The freedom of the Spirit is suggested by a word that appears many times in the Book of Acts. The word is boldness. We see that word in Acts 4:13: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John." Someone has pointed out that the word boldness means "freedom, fluency, fearlessness." When we are filled with the Spirit we have a "holy boldness."

The fellowship of the spirit is suggested by Acts 4:32. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." The church was together. There was no division of disloyalty. A little group, was not going around criticizing Peter or John. There was no splinter group. There was no group of whispering worshipers. There was a togetherness. If we are to spread the Revival we must love each other~ help each other~ forgive each other, strengthen each other.

The classic understatement of the Bible is found in 1 Corinthians 10:5 "But with many of them, God was not well pleased." Nearly three million came out of Egypt. With how many was he not pleased? The answer- with all except two! Only two who came out of Egypt entered the promised-land. The others were "overthrown" in the wilderness.. The same word is used when Jesus, in the temple, took a whip and overthrew the tables of the money-changers. Instead of being united, they were divided. Instead of commending each other, they criticized each other. How often today we find Christians living in sourness instead of radiance. Instead of wrestling with God until he humbles us, we journey on toward the promised-land, proud and self-sufficient.

Let's be honest. Our problem, too often is that we have wrong relation- ships. You can't be right with the Lord and wrong with the Bride of Christ. You can't be right with a God you have not seen when you are not right with the brother you have seen. The result of wrong relations is that God's power will not be at work. That is why others are not won to Christ. That is why Sunday School classes are often unruly and unresponsive. If children know when something is wrong between mother and dad, don't think you can fool them in a church. The nights in the Revival when young people shed the most tears were the nights when they saw adults getting right with others.

God has no pets whether they be in the pew or in the pulpit. If I have a wrong attitude toward any of you, He will whip the daylights out of me. God does not enjoy being severe. But the same God who allowed the horrible wilderness experience will let you suffer, if necessary to humble you and to prove you. The tragedy of the people in the wilderness is that they never did learn their lesson. Thank God that you and I can learn that the most important thing is the fellowship of the Spirit and that any time we try to disrupt that fellowship - look out!

III. FINALLY, WE CAN SPREAD THE REVIVAL BY GIVING PLACE AND PROMINENCE TO SHARING.

It is my firm conviction that the biggest business in all the world is the business of sharing our faith with others. This is the business of every Christian. The Christian faith offers the greatest product in the world- Salvation. Salvation is the only thing I know that can make a good man *out* of a bad man. Reformation can keep him *out* of jail, but only regeneration can keep him out of hell! It is the business of every Christian to share with others the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Harold Fickett Jr., tells of the woman who came to his Study. Tears were streaming down her cheek. She looked absolutely beaten. She said to Dr. Fickett: "I'm desperate. Can you do anything for me?" Dr. Fickett asked her: "What's your story?" This is what she said "My husband and I were married when he was a junior in college. He was the football hero. When he finished his Junior year, he thought it wasn't necessary to finish his education, so we both quit school. Since then he has become an alcoholic. Last night he beat me up while I was trying to protect my children, and I got this black eye. Now he is in the county jail. I've heard you preach about the dynamite of the gospel. Is there anything in that gospel that can do anything for me and my children and my husband?" Dr. Fickett replied: "Yes there is".

In Dr. Fickett's church was a converted alcoholic. He had taken every therapeutic remedy that had been suggested, and he was unable to overcome his alcoholism until he met the Lord Jesus Christ – the one who can drive the devil of alcoholism from a man. Dr. Fickett called the man and asked him to go to see the woman's husband, and simply with him what Jesus had done for him. He went to see the man and lead him to Christ. The following Christmas, Dr. Fickett received a Christmas card from the wife. On it were these words: "I want to thank you for what the gospel did to my home. My husband is a fine father now, and a wonderful Christian. He is regular in church attendance, and he leads us in devotions day by day. I want to thank you for what the gospel did to him:

I want to ask you a very sobering question. "If you were to die tomorrow, and we were to have your funeral in our church, and the casket was down in front of this pulpit, as the people came by to look at you as you lay in the casket, how many of them would look at your dead countenance and say: "I'm thankful for that person because he lead me to Christ."

Frankly, I am not impressed with how much you know this Book. What I want to know is: How much have you shared the faith of this Book Someone else? You may be an authority on the words of this book, but it is the will of the God who gave this Book that you lead men and women to Christ. You may be known as the Scholar of the Book. I would prefer to be known as the sharer of this Book. You may have figured out to 9th degree whether Ezekiel's wheels had Timken Bearings or SKF bearings but if you are not winning men and women to Christ you are wasting your time.

It seems to me that every Christian ought to be able to share with others the message of a great forgiveness, a great fellowship, and a great future. Have you experienced forgiveness? Has God lifted the load that you once carried? Remember that every person who has not accepted Christ is still struggling beneath a load of sin. Why not share with them the forgiveness you have found in Christ? Have you found a wonderful fellowship in the family of God? Now you know the joy of working with other Christians in the church. Why not share with others this great opportunity for fellowship? Have you come to the place where you know you have a wonderful future? Beyond the grave only that which is spiritual can enter heaven! But now that you have committed your life to Christ now that you have begun the spiritual life with the new birth, you have the assurance of a future so great that it takes your breath away to consider it. Why not share such a future with someone else as you help them to realize that to bear the image of the heavenly, one must possess heavenly life now? Thus, for someone else, life will remain eternally which begins with the second birth.

Would you like to see the spirit of Revival continue in our church? Remember the words of Jesus: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." It is more like God. God is the great giver. It is more useful not only to others but to ourselves. If we keep our faith to ourselves, we rob others of the blessing of salvation. It is more useful to ourselves. If I put my arm in a sling, and do not use it, after a while it will grow weak and thin. But if I use my arm, the stronger it will grow. The same is true with my Christian experience. The more I share it with others, the stronger my own faith grows.

Only in eternity will we know the power that comes from our simple sharing. One day a certain Sunday School was making up a box to send to a missionary station. One poor little girl wanted to send something. But what could she send with the one penny she possessed? She decided to buy a tract with her penny, and she gave the tract to her Sunday School Teacher to put in the box for the mission station. It was opened at Burdwan, India. That tract fell into the hands of the son of one of the chiefs, and led him to become a Christian. Then the young man was anxious to share his new faith with others. In one year 1500 of the natives of that country gave up their idolatry and turned in simple faith to Christ. And all of this good resulted from one tract purchased with the penny of a little girl who believed with all her soul that "it is more blessed to give than to receive!"