

## A Christless Pentecost



David Wilkerson October 1, 1982

The following is a prophetic warning from Azusa Street 75 years ago, concerning the dangers of a Christless Pentecost!

Frank Bartleman was an eyewitness to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in 1907 at Azusa Street, Los Angeles. He has been characterized as the Reporter of the Azusa Street Revival. Nearly 75 years ago, during the outpouring, he wrote a tract warning of a Christless Pentecost.

He warned: "We may not hold a doctrine, or seek an experience, except in Christ. Many are willing to seek power in order to perform miracles, draw attention and adoration of the people to themselves, thus robbing Christ of His glory, and making a fair showing in the flesh. The greatest need would seem to be for true followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. Religious enthusiasm easily goes to seed. The human spirit so predominates the show-off, religious spirit. But we must stick to our text - Christ.

"Any work that exalts the Holy Ghost or 'gifts' above Jesus will finally end up in fanaticism. Whatever causes us to exalt and love Jesus is well and safe. The reverse will ruin all. The Holy Ghost is a great light, but focused on Jesus always for His revealing.

"Where the Holy Ghost is actually in control, Jesus is proclaimed the Head - the Holy Ghost, His executive. "

In another place, Brother Bartleman warned: "The temptation seems to be toward empty manifestations. This does not require any particular cross, or death to the self-life. Hence it is always popular.

"We may not put power, gifts, the Holy Ghost, or in fact anything ahead of Jesus. Any mission that exalts even the Holy Ghost above the Lord Jesus Christ is bound for the rocks of error and fanaticism.

"There seems to be a great danger of losing sight of the fact that Jesus was 'all in all.' The work of Calvary, the atonement, must be the center for our consideration. The Holy Ghost will never draw our attention from Christ to Himself, but rather reveal Christ in a fuller way. We are in danger of slighting Jesus - getting Him 'lost in the temple,' by the exaltation of the Holy Ghost and of the gifts of the Spirit. Jesus must be the center of everything."

I do not take Brother Bartleman's warning lightly. The danger of a Christless Pentecost is very real today. I say to you it is possible to gather Spirit-filled people in one place, praising and lifting up their hands - and still have Christ walking among them as a stranger!

It's true He said, "Where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst." (Matt. 18:20 NASB) But He can be in our midst as a stranger! Ignored, unrecognized - even by those who meet in His name! The Jews gathered every Sabbath in the synagogue to speak of His name, and to prophesy of His coming. They praised the name of the Father who promised to send Him. They spoke the Messiah's name with awe and reverence. Then, when He came and walked among them - He was not recognized! He was a stranger to them!

Christ, a stranger in the midst of a Spirit-filled congregation? A stranger in the midst of those who speak His name -

who worship the Father who sent Him? A stranger to those who sing His hosannas who call Him "Lord, Lord"?

Yes! Absolutely yes! It is not only possible - it is happening among God's chosen people today!

Let me show you three ways in which we are making Christ a stranger in our midst! May the Holy Spirit take away our spiritual blindness so we can once again see Him as He really is - LORD OF ALL!

I. We Make Christ a Stranger - by Giving the Holy Spirit Pre-Eminence Over Him!

Christ, and Christ alone, must be the center of life and worship!

"And He is the head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell..." (Col. 1:18-19 KJV)

"That in all things He might have the pre-eminence..." That is - distinguished and spoken of above all others. Having first place in all things. Not even the Holy Spirit is to be exalted above that name! The upper room must never overshadow the Cross! We dare not think of Christ as simply the one who sent the Holy Spirit. In other words, "Thank You, Jesus, for sending someone better." Christ sent the Holy Spirit to reveal His own fullness within us.

When the Holy Spirit becomes the center of our attention, the church gets out of focus! The Holy Spirit descended upon Christ as He came out of baptismal waters, and the Father said of Him: "This is My beloved Son - in whom I am well pleased . . ." The Spirit descended bodily like a dove, but the focus was on the Lamb of God - who taketh away the sins of the world. Not the dove, but the Lamb!

Christ told His disciples of a coming Pentecost, when the Spirit would be outpoured for a single purpose: It was to be a power given to lift up the name of Christ! "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth..." (Acts 1:8 KJV)

Jesus made it clear that when the Spirit comes He will not draw attention to Himself, but will focus on Christ's words. He will exalt Christ.

". . . when He, the Spirit of truth, is come . . . He shall not speak of Himself . . . He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you." (John 16:13-15 KJV)

Jesus said, "He will show you My glory, My power, My Kingdom. He will remind you of all My words." The primary work of the Holy Spirit is not fellowship, although He does bring believers together as one in Christ. It is not ecstasy. It is not simply to teach us an unlearned tongue. The Spirit has come to exalt Christ! To guide all mankind to the truth that Christ is Lord! It is not enough to say the Spirit has brought us close to each other - He must bring us closer to Christ!

The fullness of the Spirit is the fullness of Christ. If you do not have a consuming love for Christ, you do not have a Holy Ghost baptism! Christ, the baptizer, sent the Holy Spirit to fire our souls over lost humanity, to get us out into the highways and hedges to reach the unsaved. To shake up our lazy lifestyles and get us to doing His work. The blessed Holy Spirit will be grieved, and finally withdraw, the moment men try to exalt Him above the Son of God! He will not permit His power to be abused by those who want only the gift and not Christ, the Giver!

What is a true Holy Ghost meeting? Is it where people all speak with tongues? Or where people are healed? Where saints jump for joy? Where saints are prophesying? More - much more than that! It is where Christ is being exalted, where His holiness pierces the soul, where men and women fall before His holy throne, broken, humbled crying, "Holy, Holy." The moving of the Holy Spirit is a moving closer to Christ, deeper in Christ, with a greater submission to His Lordship!

II. Christ Is Made a Stranger When People Praise Him, but Will Not Pray to Him!

We praise a Christ to whom we will not pray! We have become a praising people, but not a praying people. For many of God's people the prayer closet is a relic of the past. "Why ask God for what He has already promised? Just get hold of the promises and simply command deliverances!" We no longer want Christ as much as we want what He can do for us. We want an escape from pain and suffering. We want our troubles to vanish. And we are so caught up in our escape from pain, we lose the true meaning of the Cross. We refuse crosses and losses - no

Gethsemane for us! No nights of agony! We don't even know this suffering, bleeding, resurrected Christ!

We want His healing power. We want His promises of prosperity. We want His protection. We want more of this earth's goods. We want His happiness. But we really don't want Him alone!

The Church once confessed its sins - now it confesses its rights.

How many of us would serve Him if He offered nothing but Himself? No healing. No success. No prosperity. No worldly blessings. No miracles, signs, or wonders. What if - once again we had to take joyfully the spoiling of our goods? What if - instead of clear sailing and problem-free living, we faced shipwreck, fears within and fightings without? What if - instead of painless living, we suffered cruel mockings, stoning, bloodshed - being sawn asunder? What if - instead of our beautiful homes and cars, we had to wander about in deserts in sheepskins, hiding in dens and caves? What if - instead of prosperity, we were destitute, afflicted, and tormented? And the only better thing provided for us was Christ?

Very few of God's people pray anymore! They are too busy working for Jesus to talk to Him! Ministers especially have become so busy doing kingdom work, they have little or no time left to pray. There is time to visit, to build, to travel, time to vacation, to attend meetings, time for recreation, reading, counseling - but no time to pray!

Preachers who do not pray become promoters. They become frustrated building contractors. When they lose touch with God, they lose touch with their people and their needs. Preachers who don't pray have egos that spin out of control. They want their own way. They substitute sweat for unction (anointing).

Evangelists who do not pray become stars, storytellers. They lack humility, so they manipulate crowds through emotional gimmicks. The cry of many pastors is, "Oh, God, where can I find an evangelist who doesn't care about money, or who is not promoting something? One who can bring heaven down and make Christ real! Oh, God - give me a praying man to bring my congregation to its knees! " The shame of this generation is that we have too many talented men of God and only a few who have touched God in prayer.

There is even less praying in the congregation! I'm 100% for getting prayer back in our public schools! But that's not God's real problem! His problem is getting prayer back in our homes! His problem is to get His own chosen people to pray! And you are a phony if you fight for school prayer and neglect secret-closet praying yourself!

Do we pray? Oh, yes! When we need something. We have the formula down pat - "in the name of Jesus." All we need Him for is to countersign our petition checks before the Father.

I am weary of hearing people say, "This is such a busy age - I have no time to pray. I'd like to, but I don't have time. " No! It's not lack of time; it is a lack of desire. We make time for what we really want to do. Look at our Christian young people! Wasting hours of time playing Pac-man, Galaxy War, goofing off, bored, restless, looking for some action! But no time to pray! No time for Jesus! Oh, God! Somehow! Some way! Get this generation on its knees. Not just the Lord's Prayer, but a daily communion with Christ.

Our Savior, who has the care and concern for multiplied universes, has the time to pray just for you! He takes the time to intercede for you before the throne of God (Heb. 7:25), and you say you do not have time to pray to Him!

We work feverishly for a Christ we ignore. We will go anywhere, do anything, in His name. But we will not pray. We will sing in a choir. We will visit the sick and the prisoners. But we will not pray. We will counsel the hurt and needy; we will stay up all night to comfort a friend, but we will not pray. We will fight corruption! We will crusade for morality! We will stand up against nuclear weapons! But we will not pray!

Most of all, we don't pray because we really don't believe it works. Prayer is a bloody battleground! It is where victories are won! A place to die to self! A place where a holy God exposes secret sin! No wonder Satan tries to hinder prayer! A praying man sends a shudder through hell. That man or woman is marked because Satan knows prayer is the power that crushes his kingdom. Satan is not afraid of power-hungry saints, but he trembles at the sound of a praying saint!

III. Christ Is Made a Stranger in Our Midst When We Want His Power More Than His Purity!

Reader Harris, an Englishman and director of The Pentecostal League of Prayer, once challenged a congregation on this matter of power and purity. He said, "Those who want power, line up to my right. Those who want purity,

line up to my left." The congregation lined up 10 to 1 - for POWER!

In the book of Acts, Pentecost was synonymous with purity more than power. Peter told the council at Jerusalem what God did at the house of Cornelius, "God...giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us...purifying their hearts by faith..." (Acts 15:8-9 KJV)

Who is the man or woman of God who has power? Is it the one who can heal the sick and raise the dead? Is it the one who can best talk in tongues and prophesy? Is it the one who draws the most people and builds the greatest church? No! The one with the power - is the one with the purity! "... the righteous are bold as a lion.." (Proverbs 28:1 KJV)

The prophet Malachi prophesied of a supernatural purge coming to God's house.

"... the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple. .. but who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap. And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." (Malachi 3:1-3 KJV)

This is a dual prophecy. He speaks of Christ's first coming, and also of His second! He will come again suddenly, as a thief in the night. But first, He will purify His Church.

We are not ready for the coming of Christ! Is this the Church triumphant? Covetous. divorcing, depressed, worldly-minded, grasping for materialism and success, competitive, lukewarm, adulterous, rich and increased with goods, unaware of spiritual blindness and poverty, pleasure-loving, recreation-minded, consumed with sports, politics, and power - is this the Church Jesus is coming for? Simply coping, filled with fear and anxiety, satisfied only to have good health and happiness?

My Bible says He is coming back for an overcoming Church! A Church without spot or wrinkle! A people whose affections are on things above! A people with clean hands and pure hearts. A people who are looking for His coming! A people with a "new Jerusalem state of mind."

The question is no longer, "What can my faith get me? What miracle will He perform for me?" The question now is - "How shall I stand before Him? How shall I make it at the Judgment?" "... who shall stand when He appeareth?" (Malachi 3:2 KJV)

The question is no longer, "How do I feel - how do I get happiness? How do I get the desire of my heart?" The question is - "Can I withstand that moment when I stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ? How can I withstand when I've lived so carelessly, so selfishly, so neglectful of His great salvation?" The central issue now has nothing to do with this world at all. At issue is - "HAVE I NEGLECTED CHRIST IN THIS MIDNIGHT HOUR?"

The purge is going to begin in the pulpit! "... He shall purify the sons of Levi..." (Malachi 3:3 KJV) God is going to accomplish that by "turning up the heat." God is going to make things so hot, so fiery, so intense, God's men will be driven to their knees! This is the fire of the Holy Ghost! It is the fire of persecution. It is the fire of tribulation. The fire of unbelievable hardships, ridicule, gossip, financial problems. He is going to shake everything that can be shaken! He is going to shake, and scrub, and burn, and purge - and purify!

No man or woman of God will escape the purging! God is determined to get all the dross and filth out of us. The purge will spread from the pulpit to the pew! Get ready, saints! God is getting ready to expose all sin, all adultery, all foolishness! The Holy Ghost is going to reprove us of sin. How can you play games when God puts you in His crucible and turns up the fire? Your Holy Ghost baptism is going to have some fire put to it now!

Malachi said - "...the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven: and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up..." (Malachi 4:1 KJV)

God also promises to bring down the strongholds of the enemy! He is going to once and for all let the devil and the world know who has the power!

If God is about to do all that the prophets predicted He would - WHAT A GLORIOUS FUTURE JUST AHEAD!

- A purged, purified ministry!
- A Church that God is calling back to repentance and holiness.
- A people washed, cleansed - offering praises in true righteousness.
- A revival among our young people! Drug strongholds coming down! Alcohol and divorce no longer prevalent among God's people.
- The sound of prayer - intercession!
- A people of God who will discern between the holy and the unholy!
- Everywhere, God's people turning again to the Word.
- A tested, tried people, once again devoted to the Person of Jesus Christ!
- His Person being lifted up to draw all men to Him!
- Christ no longer the stranger in our midst, but CROWNED - PRE-EMINENT!
- A Pentecost that truly exalts the name and power of Jesus Christ, the Lord of all.

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