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Whenever Jesus Christ Is Glorified, the Holy Spirit Comes

And when the day of Pentecost was 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 it 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 at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under 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.

ACTS 2:1–6

When we come to this important Scripture passage, the second chapter of Acts, I want us to consider something that is so often overlooked—the fact

that whenever Jesus is glorified, the Holy Spirit comes!

Contrary to what most people unintentionally assume, the important thing here was not that the Spirit had come—the important thing was that Jesus had been exalted.

Now, let's summarize this chapter in Acts. Peter and all the disciples were gathered together when the day of Pentecost was fully come, and they were all with one accord in one place. Suddenly as they were gathered, "there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind" (Acts 2:2). It was not a rushing, mighty wind—it was the sound of such a wind. It filled all the house where they were sitting. Little jets of fire sat upon each forehead, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak in languages. Seventeen nations were there and heard them speak in their own languages. The ones who could be amazed were amazed. The doubters doubted, and the questioners said, "What meaneth this?" (2:12).

Those who sat in the seat of the scornful were also present, and they said, "These men are full of new wine" (2:13).

"But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words. . . . This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (2:14, 16).

He proceeded to tell them how Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled prophecy and from there on, it was all about Jesus

of Nazareth. In verses 32 and 33 Peter testified that “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.” Then in verse 36, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

So, the important thing, according to Peter, was the fact that Jesus had been exalted.

Jesus Himself had said on that last great day of the feast at Jerusalem, recorded in John 7,

“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified) (John 7:38–39).

It is plain that the glorification of Jesus brought the Holy Spirit, and we ought to be able to get hold of that thought instantly. So, we repeat: Where Jesus is glorified, the Holy Spirit comes. He does not have to be begged—the Holy Spirit comes when the Savior is glorified. When Christ is truly honored, the Spirit comes.

FAITH IN FAITH VS. FAITH IN GOD

Now, I want you to notice particularly Acts 2:14, “Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice . . .”

He stood up, and then he lifted up his voice.

I would remind you that Peter here stands for the whole Church of God. Peter was the first man to get on his feet after the Holy Spirit had come to the Church. Peter had believed the Lord’s word and he had received confirmation in his own heart. The difference between faith as it is found in the New Testament and faith as it is found now is that faith in the New Testament actually produced something—there was a confirmation of it. Faith now is a beginning and an end. We have faith in faith—but nothing happens. They had faith in a risen Christ and something did happen.

That’s the difference.

Now, here was Peter, standing up, and he lifted up—and that should be the business of the Church—to stand up and lift up. Peter became a witness on earth, as the church should be, to things in heaven. The Church must be a witness to powers beyond the earthly and the human; and because I know this, it is a source of great grief to me that the Church is trying to run on its human powers.

Peter testified to something beyond the human and the earthly. Some power that lay beyond the earthly scene was interested in us and was willing to enter and become

known to us. That power turns out to be none other than the Spirit of God Himself.

So, Peter, witnessing to things he had experienced, wanted to influence, urge and exhort those who had not yet experienced to enter in.

Now, a plain word here about the Christian Church trying to carry on in its own power: That kind of Christianity makes God sick, for it is trying to run a heavenly institution after an earthly manner.

For myself, if I couldn't have the divine power of God, I would quit the whole business. The church that wants God's power will have something to offer besides social clubs, knitting societies, the Boy Scout troops and all of the other side issues.

WHAT WE MUST DO

If any church is to be a church of Christ, the living, organic member of that redeemed Body of which Christ is the Head, then its teachers and its members must strive earnestly and sacrificially with constant prayer to do a number of things.

Fight Encroachment

First, we must strive to make our beliefs and practices New Testament in their content. We must teach and believe New Testament truths, with nothing dragged in from the outside. It means we must be going constantly back to the grass roots.

The men who pioneered our great North American continent took over a wilderness and conquered it. They went out with their axes, cutting down trees, building houses and then planting corn, potatoes, other vegetables and grain. You know, when they planted, they didn't go to bed and sleep until time for the harvest. They fought encroachment from the wilderness from the day they planted their corn and the rest of their crops until they harvested them and had them safely in their log barns.

The wilderness encroaches on the fruitful field, and unless there is constant fighting off of this encroachment, there will be little or no harvest.

I think it is exactly the same with the Church, for as one of the old saints said, "Never think for a minute that there will be a time when you will not be tempted. He is tempted the most effectively who thinks that he isn't being tempted at all."

Just when we think we are not being tempted, that is the time of danger, and so it is with the Church. We lean back on our own laurels and say, "That may be true of some churches, but it is not true of us. We are increased with goods and have need of nothing!" (see Revelation 3:17).

This is to remind us that we must fight for what we have. Our little field of God's planting must have the necessary weapons and plenty of watchmen out there to drive off the crows and all sorts of creatures, to say nothing of the little insects that destroy the crops. We have to keep after them. We must keep our field healthy, and

there is only one way to do that, and that is to keep true to the Word of God. We must constantly go back to the grass roots and get the Word into the Church.

Seek the Power

In the second place, we must also earnestly, sacrificially and prayerfully strive to be empowered with that same power that came upon them.

Peter said, “He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear” (Acts 2:33). We must live to gear ourselves into things eternal and to live the life of heaven here upon the earth. We must put loyalty to Christ first at any cost. Anything less than that really isn’t a Christian church. I would rather be a member of a group that meets in a little room on a side street than to be part of a great going activity that is not New Testament in its doctrine, in its spirit, in its living, in its holiness, in all of its texture and tenor. We need not expect to be popular in such a church, but certain fruits will follow if we make a church that kind of a church.

FRUITS OF A SPIRIT-FILLED CHURCH

Now, let’s note some of the characteristics of a Spirit-filled and Spirit-led congregation.

Joy

First, they will be a joyful people.

The history of the Moravians tells how the Holy Spirit

came upon this movement one October morning in 1727. They were having communion. They went out joyful from that place, scarcely knowing whether they were on earth or had died and already gone to heaven. That joyfulness was characteristic of the Moravians for 100 years. They were not just a happy people in the sense of working up their happiness—their joy came from within.

We do have many professing Christians in our day who are not joyful, but they spend time trying to work it up. Now, brethren, I say that when we give God His place in the Church, when we recognize Christ as Lord high and lifted up, when we give the Holy Spirit His place, there will be joy that doesn't have to be worked up. It will be a joy that springs like a fountain. Jesus said that it should be a fountain, an artesian well, that springs up from within. That's one characteristic of a Spirit-filled congregation. They will be a joyful people, and it will be easy to distinguish them from the children of the world.

I wonder what the apostle Paul would say if he came down right now and looked us over in our congregations. What if he walked up and down the aisles of our churches, then went to the theater and looked them over, then on to a hockey game, on to the crowds at the shopping center and into the crowded streets? Then when he came back and looked us over again, I wonder if he would see very much difference. But where the Church is a spiritual Church, filled with the Spirit, we should always be able

to distinguish the children of God from the children of the world.

Useful

Also, let us consider that a congregation that is Spirit-filled will be useful to the race of men.

I am not worried about what the critics say about preachers being parasites and the churches not producing anything, but I do believe that the Christian Church ought to be useful to the whole community. We can help the neighborhood where we live, and the neighborhood will be better because we are there as witnessing Christians. We don't need to apologize. Actually, they owe us a great debt, for our kind of transformed people keep the crime rate down, and where we have more God-filled, Spirit-filled churches we are going to have fewer policemen on the street. Wherever there's more godliness, there's less crime.

A Spirit-filled congregation is useful in the neighborhood—useful to the sons of men, even the ones that are not converted.

Influential

In another sense, we are to be influential among the churches, as well.

I would like to see a church become so godly, so Spirit-filled that it would have a spiritual influence on all of the churches in the entire area. Paul told some of his people, “ye were ensamples to all that believe” and “in

every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad” (1 Thessalonians 1:7, 8).

It is entirely right that I should hope this of you. I could hope that we might become so Spirit-filled, walking with God, learning to worship, living so clean and so separated that everybody would know it, and the other churches in our area would be blessed on account of it.

It is common knowledge that when Luther carried out his reformation, the Catholic Church was forced to clean up—the moral pressure from Lutheranism brought about change in the Roman Church. When Wesley came and preached throughout England, the Anglican Church was forced to clean up some of the things that were wrong. Methodism was a spiritual force that compelled others to do something about their own condition.

There is no reason why we could not be a people so filled with the Spirit, so joyfully singing His praises and living so clean in our business and home and school that the people and other churches would know it and recognize it.

The great thing about this is that when we have a Spirit-filled people who can live well, they can also die well. They began to look at the martyrs in the Roman days and said one to another, “Behold, these Christians die well!” Recall that old Balaam wanted to die the death of the righteous, but he wouldn’t live the life of the righteous. We Christians ought to be able to die well—we should be able to do that if nothing else.

SOME WON'T LIKE IT

But, of course, there are some folks who just won't ever feel at home in a Spirit-filled congregation. Not all men have faith and there are some who don't want that kind of a church. I will name some of them now.

"Sunday" Christians

The people who put on religion as a well-pressed Sunday garment won't like that kind of a joyful church.

When we have a revival and the blessing of God comes to us and we do get the help we need from God, those who make religion merely a Sunday garment won't like it very well—in fact, they will be disturbed. From the biblical side, we will insist that they live right on Monday morning, and they don't want to do that. They want to keep their religion disengaged from practical living. Their religion is here and their living is over there. On Sunday they go in and polish their religion, but about 11 p.m. in the evening they put it on the shelf. On Monday they go out and live the way they want to live. I refuse to surrender to that kind of thing and to that kind of people. We are to be a church of the living God, and not a gathering of the influential and the big shots. The big shots can come if they get on their knees—a big shot on his knees isn't any taller than anyone else, you know.

Comfortable Christians

The people who refuse to let religion endanger them in any way won't like that kind of church and congregation.

They are those who refuse to let their church or their religion or their faith interfere with their pleasures or their own plans. They know about salvation, and they're willing to serve Jesus. They are on their way to heaven, they will make it through— but they are going to have fun on the way there, and they lay their lives out just as a gardener lays out the garden.

We lay out the plans for our own lives and say, "Now, Lord, it is nice to serve You and we love You, Lord, and let's sing a chorus," but we won't change our plans in any way.

But, let me remind you, the cross of Jesus Christ always changes men's plans. The cross of Christ is revolutionary, and if we are not ready to let it be revolutionary in us nor let it cost us anything or control us in any way, we are not going to like a church that takes the things of God seriously.

People want the benefits of the cross but yet they do not want to bow to the control of the cross. They want to take all the cross can offer but they don't want to be under the lordship of Jesus.

"Fun" Christians

The people who expect religion to be fun won't like that kind of a Spirit-filled congregation.

It is my belief that we have just gone through a long period when Christianity was the “funniest” thing on the continent. We have been told over and over that we could have more fun serving Jesus than we could doing anything else in the whole world. It is clean, too—and we don’t have a hangover!

We have been taught in some good evangelical circles, “You serve Jesus and you can have all the fun you want, and you won’t have that ugly hangover!”

That was Christianity for the sake of fun, Christianity as an entertaining medium. The whole thing is offensive and foul before God Almighty. My brother, the cross of Christ isn’t fun, and it never was fun.

There is such a thing as the joy of the Lord which is the strength of His people (see Nehemiah 8:10); there is such a thing as having “joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8), but the idea that Christianity is another form of entertainment is perfectly ridiculous.

When I sing “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,” I am worshiping God Almighty. If you want to call “entertainment” that which they do before the throne when they cry day and night without ceasing, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty” (Revelation 4:8), then I am an entertainer. If it isn’t entertainment—and it isn’t—then I am a worshiper.

The Church must worship, beloved! There is more healing joy in five minutes of worship than there is in five nights of revelry. Nobody ever worshiped God and

went out and committed suicide as a hangover. Many a man has killed himself because he had just burned himself out trying to have fun. Many a pretty young woman has thrown herself into having fun, and before she is twenty-five she has to have a retread job done on her countenance—she has simply burned herself out.

Oh, how I love to see the grace of God in a face—don't you? I remember being asked to preach to a group of quiet, plainly dressed people, quite separated from the world in many ways and customs. The women had little black hats sitting on top of their heads and their hair was done up in buns. I had a tie on, you know, and I said to the man who was to introduce me, "You know, I'm a Gentile, and I don't know whether they will take me in or not."

He said, "Oh, preach to their hearts, and they will just forget that you don't belong to them." I did just that—and they did just that! I was just absolutely refreshed and wonderfully blessed.

Cultural Christians

Nor will the people who embrace a church for its cultural values be happy and satisfied in a Spirit-filled congregation.

Have you ever met these people? They don't know anything about the Spirit in their lives or the Spirit-filled church. They do believe the cultural value of the church is good for them and offers them something, and they

want their children brought up in the cultural atmosphere of the church. They want book reviews and lectures on flower arrangements and child-rearing and all sorts of things—but it is a foregone conclusion that they are not going to be at home among God’s dear regenerated people who are intent upon spiritual advance.

So, we will always have to be aware that this kind of discontent is going to rule out a few, and we are made sad by their decision. But we thank God for those who will be in their glory if we go constantly to the grass roots, weeding out everything that is not of God and keeping the grain growing lush and beautiful. Thank God for those who want to gear into things heavenly and walk with God and obey the truth and love each other!

WHO WILL THRIVE IN
A SPIRIT-FILLED CHURCH?

Who are these people who will be happy and contented and fulfilled in a Spirit-filled congregation?

They Want to Be Rid of Their Sins

They are those who want to be rid of their sins. If I had a cancer growing on my neck I would want to be rid of it—the sooner the better. No one could come to me and say, “Now, I have a cowbell—let me shake it. Don’t you like it?”

I would say, “No, I don’t like it—I’m interested in this cancer on my neck. Do you have a cure for it?”

You say, “Aw, let’s forget the cancer—let me jingle the bell.”

Sometimes we have this kind in the church, but they are of no help. Let’s talk about getting rid of our sins. Some people that are overwhelmed with the desire to be free from their sins have had refining fire go through their hearts sanctifying the whole. These people will be happy among us.

They Desire to Know God

The people who want to know God and to walk with God will be happy here, too. Their ambition is to walk with God and to “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth” (Revelation 14:4). The Lord’s people know and appreciate one another. We may get an occasional bad apple—Jesus had Judas Iscariot in His little flock. We know each other and when we shake hands and someone says something to us about God, we sort of know we are talking to a brother in Christ. No matter what our backgrounds or where we came from—we all talk the same language if we are brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, our Lord. We know and appreciate one another.

They Hear His Voice

Then, too, those who have learned to recognize the voice of the good Shepherd will be at home in a Spirit-filled church.

It is sad, to us, that some people have never heard the

voice of the Shepherd. His voice is as tender as a lullaby and as strong as the wind and as mighty as “the sound of many waters” (1:15). The people who have learned to hear and recognize the voice of Jesus—that healing, musical, solemn, beautiful voice of Jesus in His Church—are always at home where everything centers around Him.

The true Christian Church can be a conglomeration of everything under the sun. That is, we may have Calvinists and Arminians and Methodists and Baptists and all sorts of people, and yet we are all together on one thing—Jesus Christ is wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption! He is All in all, and the people of the Lord who have learned to hear the voice of the Shepherd gravitate toward that kind of Church.

They Sense His Presence

Then, there are those who are sensitive to the Invisible Presence, and they will be at home in this group.

They may not be so sure about who else is present, but they know the Lord is present and they are sensitive to that.

Do you find your own heart sensitive to the Lord’s presence, or are you among those who are “samplers” and “nibblers”? God help you if you are, for the child of the King isn’t a sampler and a nibbler—he’s a sheep who loves his Shepherd, and he stays close to his Shepherd. That’s the only safe place for a sheep—at the Shepherd’s side, because the devil doesn’t fear sheep—he just fears

the Shepherd. Your spiritual safety and well-being lies in being near to the Shepherd. Stay close to Jesus and all the wolves in the world cannot get a tooth in you.

There are those who have tasted of the good Word of God and felt the mysterious power of the world to come. Thank God for those in the churches who would rather hear the voice of Jesus than the voice of the greatest preacher or the best singer in the world. Thank God for those who would rather be conscious of the Divine Presence than be in the presence of the greatest man in the world. Thank God for those who are sick of their own sin and long to be holy—I pray that your numbers may increase. These are the things in which we believe: Jesus Christ the Lord; clean living, decency and separation from all things that are wrong; joyful, radiant, happy worship; sweet fellowship based on kindness and patience, endurance and honesty. We believe in the missionary outlook, and above all things, “worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” (1 Chronicles 16:29).