

The Promise Of The Father

~Other Speakers G-L: Aaron Hills:

"And being assembled with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which ye have heard of me." -- Acts 1:4.

First things first, is the law of successful achievement. A trained and efficient mind has a sense of logical order and sequence. Before a railroad is built the route is surveyed, the right of way is secured, the funds are collected, and a vast deal of work is done first that the public does not see.

The erection of the tower and the gilding of the weather vane is not the beginning of the great cathedral that is to be the home of worshipers for ages. The plan first, and the foundation, and the great structure: after that, the windows and the organ.

It is so with the making of the temple of a great spiritual life. There are things that are initial and primary, and cannot take a secondary place.

The kingdom of God was to be established on earth and among men. It was to be the greatest enterprise of all ages of human history. "The God of heaven shall set up this kingdom, and it shall stand forever" (Dan. 2:44).

Jesus had often talked about this kingdom to His bewildered disciples. He revealed to them as much as they were able to understand. His words were, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." But He did tell them things of supremest importance that they were to make first in their lives.

1. -- A Command.

When an oriental despot commands, men tremble and obey. He has power over the life of his subjects. "Jesus commanded them that they should not depart out of Jerusalem." Martha might have said, "I have neglected all my domestic and social affairs for a long time now, waiting on Jesus. I do not see why I cannot abide in my own home in Bethany among my friends!" Matthew might have said, "I have neglected my business at the custom house these two years, and I find that my revenues are dwindling. If this goes on much longer I shall be bankrupt." Peter and John might have said, "Servants are a poor substitute for proprietors. We must look after our boats and our nets and our fishing, or the business will be ruined." All the rest of the company might have pleaded some urgent demand upon their time and attention and energies that would justify them in going elsewhere at that particular time. Yet here was the command -- "Depart not from Jerusalem; but wait for the promise of the Father!"

Waiting is a tiresome business. It wears on the nerves. It exhausts the patience. It finally becomes almost unbearable. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." Waiting for a guest that does not arrive, a lover who does not come, a promise that is not fulfilled! Just waiting! It is such a wearing, exasperating business!

Wait where? In Jerusalem, in an upstairs prayer-chamber! Why, Lord, the world waited for your coming thousands of years. And after You came, You waited thirty years before You opened Your lips to tell about Your mission. And You have spoken Your life-giving messages to our ears, and wrought Your miracles before our eyes. We saw You die on the cross for the world's sin. We have had a matchless training at Your feet, and we have a message of life through faith in Christ which the world is in dying need of. Sinners are hungering for the "Bread of Life" and thirsting for "The Water of Life," and longing to hear of some One Who can take from their hearts the burden of sin. They are actually dying, "having no hope and without God." Let us go at once and tell the perishing of "the Mighty to save," "The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

"No," says the divine . . . "First things first! Do not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father!"

How slow the Christian Church has been to learn the lesson! Young people will not take time to get an education to prepare themselves to preach the gospel. The world is dying, and they are in a hurry to tell a message before they get a message to tell. They should heed the Master's command and tarry in the school of the prophets till they get their message. And when they have their minds trained and their intellectual apprehension of truth is exact and keen and they really have a message which men need -- a gospel of salvation which can give life and hope to the despairing and dying, even then the divine voice says, "WAIT" for the preparation of the heart.

II. -- " The promise of the Father."

What is it? The immediate context does not tell: but still we know what they waited for, and what after ten days of waiting they obtained. "Then will I sprinkle clean water (type of the Holy Spirit) upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you: And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. And I will save you from all your uncleannesses" (Ezek. 36:25-29). "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2:28). After the ten days of waiting and prayer, the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, and Peter stood up and quoted the above, and said: "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh' " (Acts 2:16-17).

This pouring out of the Holy Spirit, then, is what the Father promised, that for which all the members of the Church of Christ were commanded to wait and pray. This was the supreme blessing, the thing of first importance, compared with which everything else was subordinate. This was the burden of Christ's desire for His disciples, as He was about to leave them and ascend to His Father. This was the deepest longing of His heart -- this His parting charge to His Church for all the coming years -- "DO not henceforth try to teach My gospel, or to preach, or to be missionaries to evangelize the heathen world until you yourself are baptized with the Holy Spirit."

Alas! the sad mistakes, the costly blunders, the abortive efforts, the useless sermons preached, the wasted years, the ruined lives, the lost souls that have resulted from disregarding this parting charge of the Master! We have put everything else in the foreground, and emphasized all the other qualifications for the ministry, until Christ's FIRST THING has been lost sight of and quite forgotten.

Hence the perversions of truth, the monstrous errors, the heresies, the emasculated gospels, the "cunningly devised fables," the fads and hobbies, the divided and wrecked churches, the multitudes of priests and preachers and people lost for ever because they would not have the cleansing baptism with the Holy Spirit!

III. -- The blessing of the Spirit was possible.

A promiser puts himself under obligation to fulfill his promise. He cannot break his word without moral ruin to himself. But the Promiser in this case is our own heavenly Father. He cannot lie. He cannot be untrue to us, or to Himself, and "He is able to do what He hath promised."

Therefore we have every encouragement to seek this blessing expectantly: may we not say with every possible, or at least every needed assurance, that we may obtain this great gift of the Holy Spirit? The whole work of salvation, so far as this life is concerned, culminates in this Pentecostal baptism with the Holy Spirit.

Every disciple who obeyed Christ and went to that upper chamber and tarried and prayed till God's appointed time came, obtained the great blessing. Even so it is recorded: "He gives the Holy Spirit to them that obey Him" (Acts 5:32). It is not a matter of age, or culture, or years of religious experience, or mental endowment. After one has obtained the blessing of regeneration, then the next experience may be and should be, the baptism with the Spirit for sanctification. John Wesley puts on record that one Grace Paddy was converted and then sanctified within twelve hours. Twice in my own meetings a man was regenerated and sanctified within five hours. Twice in my presence a seeker obtained the first blessing of regeneration and then the second blessing of sanctification at the same after-service. Let it be distinctly understood, both blessings were not obtained at the same moment, by a single act of faith. The first blessing was obtained by faith exercised for the first blessing of regeneration, and was witnessed to by the Spirit; then, by consecration and faith, the second blessing -- the baptism with the Spirit -- was definitely sought for sanctification, and was obtained and witnessed to by the Holy Spirit.

This is not only the divine plan and order, but it is the believer's experience. And God is both willing and able to bring these experiences very near together in time, if we will have it so. Oh, the wonders of God's grace!

IV. -- " Ye shall have power, the Holy Spirit coming upon you" (v.8).

Every one longs for power. The merchant wants power to draw more customers and sell more goods; the gambler wants power to win the game; the warrior to win the battle; the politician to win the election; the statesman to rule the country. There is not an ambitious sinner on earth who does not covet power to accomplish his selfish ends. But power is unsafe in a sinner's hands. It is like a stick of dynamite in the hands

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of an insane man. There is no knowing what awful deed he will commit with it. But when God has got sin and selfishness out of a man, and got divine knowledge into him, then it is perfectly safe for God to entrust him with a goodly measure of power.

So Jesus said, "Tarry in the Jerusalem chamber till you are sanctified; and you will be endued with power." When a man has a clean heart and seeks divine wisdom and guidance, he will not abuse power or use it apart from the glory of God and the good of men. Power to live a victorious life! Power to guard against all the wiles and traps and hidden snares of the Evil One! Power to witness successfully for Christ at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances. Power to do whatever God has for us to do! Power "to speak a word in season to him that is weary, or tried, or tempted, or in need of guidance! Power to preach to one, as Nathan preached to David, or to preach to a thousand, or to ten thousand; or to write a tract, or an article, or a book that God will use to win thousands to Christ! Wonderful, God-given power!