

Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada

Historical Sermons on the Holy Spirit

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**The Evidence & Experience of Pentecost**

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...those well-known words. *When the Day of Pentecost came they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. And all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the spirit enabled them.*

Pentecost is special. It was special to the Jewish people and it is special to us today. Pentecost was an annual Jewish festival. It took place in the harvest time. It was a time of great celebration for the faithfulness of God. You can read it in detail in the book of Leviticus. Pentecost is also special for Christians. The church was born on the Day of Pentecost. Pentecost is the birthday of the church and it doesn't matter what denominational background you are from, what your church persuasion is, all Christians recognize that the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after Passover when Jesus was crucified, became the birthday of the church.

Pentecost is much more than a historical event. Pentecost is the coming of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost speaks of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit being released today in the life of the church and in the lives of the individual members of a church. Pentecost speaks of the total work and ministry of the Holy Spirit. It speaks of the gifts of the spirit. It speaks of the fruit of the spirit. It speaks of the presence of the person of the Holy Spirit. It speaks of all that is involved in the work of the Holy Spirit, both in the life of the church and the life of an individual.

Our text tonight speaks of two things. It speaks of the experience of Pentecost and also the evidence of Pentecost. Our text is the fourth verse. "...all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the spirit enabled them." It is a text we know well. We are familiar with it in our church circles. Few adults in our congregations are not able to quote that verse by memory. I would say a word to our young people tonight, people who have grown up in this congregation. This text is an important one for our congregation. It is a verse that gives the distinctive testimony of

our congregation. It is a verse that gives us our unique testimony as to the work and person of the Holy Spirit. It is our understanding of this particular text that marks us as being different from other evangelical churches in the community. It is a verse that should be underlined in everyone's Bible. All of them, it says, were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the spirit enabled them.

There are two parts to the verse. First, the experience of Pentecost. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit. Second, the evidence of Pentecost. They began to speak in other tongues as the spirit enabled them. The initial experience of Pentecost happened to one hundred twenty believers in the City of Jerusalem. Jesus had told his disciples to wait in the city until they received power from on high, power that would come from the person of the Holy Spirit. So they waited. And as they waited they prayed. They were in an upper room. We don't know exactly where that is, but as they were gathered in that upper room, probably the home of John Mark's mother and father, they were brought together in love. They were in one accord.

And as they were gathered together suddenly as the Day of Pentecost came, all of them who were gathered there were filled with the Holy Spirit. It was a wonderful exhilarating transforming experience. They were filled with the Holy Spirit. And then it says they began. They began to do many things because Pentecost was a new beginning. Pentecost brought a fresh start. It was the start of a fresh spiritual revelation and revolution. It was the start of turning the world upside down for the cause of Christ.

My message tonight is this. The historical events of Pentecost, which took place just over nineteen hundred years ago in the City of Jerusalem, were not intended to be merely a one-time occurrence. But it is God's intention that that which happened back there in the City of Jerusalem be a current present experience for everyone who is a child of God today. It is not only something that we should experience, it is something that we can experience if we will open our hearts and our lives to what the spirit of God wants to do in our midst.

I speak first of all of the experience of Pentecost. It says they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. We live in an experience oriented society. Our world isn't much into theory any more. We want experiences. People want to feel something. They want to have

an experience. People aren't into abstract learning. They want something that is concrete, something they can feel, something they can touch, something they can experience in their emotions. They want something to touch them. That is one of the appeals of the drug culture. It's an experience. Let me tell you friend, the greatest experience next to coming to Jesus Christ as personal Saviour that you can have is the experience of Pentecost. It's something that the disciples of Jesus, the hundred and twenty felt. It's something that happened to them. It was a God ordained God given experience. Pentecost is not dry theology. Pentecost is not a ritual. It is not a ceremony. It is an experience that revolutionizes a person. It brings life and energy and vitality. It is something you can feel. It is something that touches you through every particle of your being. It's an experience. It's an encounter with Jesus Christ. It is an encounter as Jesus Christ pours out his Holy Spirit upon you.

What was the experience of the hundred and twenty? What actually happened that day? We read it a moment ago in Acts 2:1-4. The first four verses tell the story. First of all, it was the fulfillment of a prophecy. John the Baptist had said that I baptize you with water for repentance. But He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Jesus himself had predicted what would happen. He said I am going to send on you what my Father has promised. But stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.

Then in the first chapter of Acts we have the prophecy again of Jesus. On one occasion while he was eating with them, he gave them this command – not a suggestion – a command: do not leave Jerusalem but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. John baptized with water but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. And Peter, after it happened on the Day of Pentecost, gave these words as an indication of the fulfillment of prophecy. He said, "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel in the last days, God said, I will pour out my spirit upon all people." So Pentecost is the fulfillment of a prophecy.

What happened that day? A hundred and twenty people were in a room praying. It was called the upper room. It was the upstairs in a home. They spent the time in prayer. Acts 1 says they were all joined constantly together in prayer, along with the women

and Mary, the mother of Jesus and his brothers. They were constantly praying. They prayed for ten days waiting upon God, seeking God, calling out to God. And suddenly when the Day of Pentecost came, as they were praying, Acts, chapter 2 tells us that they are all filled with the Holy Spirit.

How did it happen? The verses tell us that there was a sound like a strong, violent wind blowing in the room where they were sitting. It was a wind that came from heaven. It was a wind the sound of which filled the entire room where they were sitting. And as they looked around they looked and there was fire in the room. It was like the fire that burned in the bush that appeared to Moses. It was fire that did not consume anything. And as the fire came down it divided and separated and there was a piece of fire sitting on the top of each head, each person gathered in that upper room. The unique thing was the shape of the flame of fire that appeared on the head of each person, for the fire was shaped in the form of a tongue. Significant, as we'll see in a moment.

The wind blew. The fire came. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit. It says they were all filled with the Holy Spirit; each one of the hundred and twenty, each one was filled with the Holy Spirit. God, the Holy Spirit, who had taken part in the creation of the world, the Holy Spirit who had come upon Abraham and Gideon and Moses and David in Old Testament times, God the Holy Spirit who had miraculously come upon Mary when she conceived Jesus, God the Holy Spirit, God in the person of the Holy Spirit came upon each of these hundred and twenty and filled them with himself. God, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is every bit as much God as God the Father. He is every bit as much God as God the Son. God, the Holy Spirit came down and filled them and consumed them and took control of them, all one hundred twenty of them. It says the Holy Spirit filled them.

I have said this before and I say it again. When we talk about filling we usually have the idea of a liquid and we fill a glass right to the top. That's not what it means. The Holy Spirit is not a liquid. You don't pour the Holy Spirit like a liquid. That is idiomatic terminology. It's a metaphor that is used in the scriptures. You don't pour the Holy Spirit like a liquid. He doesn't fill us like a liquid. He's a person and when he comes, to be filled means he takes control. He takes charge. He takes dominion over a person.

He is in full control. We are filled with the Holy Spirit. We are under his dominion, under his control, under his charge.

That's what happened on the Day of Pentecost. They were filled, controlled, consumed by the presence of the person of God, the Holy Spirit. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean to us today? Friend, the experience of Pentecost is just as real for us today as it was for them on the Day of Pentecost. There is nowhere in the scripture any evidence that the work of the Holy Spirit was to cease after the days of the first church. Nowhere in scripture will you find any evidence that the workings of the Holy Spirit, the signs and wonders, the miracles that accompany the work and the presence of the Holy Spirit were to stop at the end of the first church age. You won't find that anywhere. On the contrary, there is every evidence within the scriptures that the work of the Holy Spirit is to continue and grow and expand until Jesus comes. The Holy Spirit has always been active in the church. There's been no era of the church when the Holy Spirit has not been active. Sometimes the Holy Spirit has been more active and more visible in his work than others, but there has never been a time when the Holy Spirit has been inactive in the life and ministry of the church.

But now in these last days the Holy Spirit is coming into the church, being poured out into the church, in a new dimension. The Holy Spirit is not doing a new thing. I get a little uncomfortable when I hear people talking about the Holy Spirit doing a new thing. He's not doing a new thing. He's simply doing in a greater dimension what he has always been doing. And more and more people are being touched and coming under the umbrella of the blessing and the outpouring of the spirit than ever before. It's not a new thing. It's just that more and more people are experiencing what God is doing. The Holy Spirit is being poured out around the world today in a dimension and in a force and in a presence that is unprecedented in the history of the church.

Friend, the same thing that happened on the Day of Pentecost is happening today. The experience of Pentecost is not simply something that is for the current day, as it was for the Day of Pentecost. The experience of Pentecost is something that is for every child of God. On the Day of Pentecost it says that all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.

It wasn't a case of some of them being filled with the Holy Spirit while others watched. It wasn't a case of the emotional people being filled while the rational people sat back and analyzed it. It wasn't a case of one hundred fifteen of them being filled with the Holy Spirit and five of them being by-passed by it all. As they gathered in the upper room, as they sought God, as they prayed together, the Holy Spirit came down and filled all of them. Friend, that's the way God intends it to be in his church today. The working of the Holy Spirit is not something that is reserved for just a few. The Holy Spirit is not just a person who wants to come and work in a select group of super spiritual people, people who are perhaps more demonstrative or more emotional or more exuberant in their Christian experience. The baptism of the Holy Spirit and the working of the Holy Spirit is something that is not only available for all, it is something that is intended for all.

And it's not something that is reserved for adults. It is not something that is reserved for grandparents. It is something that every child of God, from a three-year old child to a ninety-three year old person can experience. This is something that is for everyone. It's God's gift to us all. Friend, everything that God the Holy Spirit did in the life and the ministry of the early church he wants to do in your life.

Let me just underscore the fact that the experience of Pentecost is not the same as the experience of salvation. The hundred and twenty had been following Jesus. They were witnesses to the crucifixion. They had spent forty days talking with the resurrected Saviour and talking to him. They had obeyed the Lord. They had followed the Lord. But even though all those things happened, they still needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit. When we are born again, we are born of the spirit of God. The Holy Spirit creates faith in our lives. The Holy Spirit is present in our lives. We are born of the spirit. The scripture tells us we are baptized by the spirit into the body of Christ. That's not talking about the baptism with the Holy Spirit. That's talking about salvation.

But friend, in addition to all those experiences, there is another experience that is available to us all. It comes subsequent to the experience of salvation. It comes after the experience of salvation. Sometimes it comes very close and it can happen in the same evening as you are seeking God for salvation, God can fill you with the Holy Spirit. But sometimes there's a time lapse, not because God wants it that way but

because we fail to enter into all that God has for us. That second experience, that subsequent experience that happens after the experience of salvation, the Bible calls the baptism with the Holy Spirit. That happens when the Holy Spirit comes upon us and he fills us.

Do you remember what Paul asked the people in Ephesus? Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? What was Paul saying? He was recognizing the possibility that a person could be a believer. He was recognizing the possibility that it was possible for a person to follow Jesus Christ, to be born again, and yet not have the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Even though you have been saved and you are on your way to heaven, there's another experience for you. It is the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Salvation is just the beginning. The spirit of God wants to come upon you and take charge of your life. He wants to empower you for service. He wants to work on your personality and make you the kind of person that God wants you to be. He wants to give you a greater freedom and release to worship and praise. Pentecost is for everyone.

I would say the experience of Pentecost is also a very specific experience. The Holy Spirit works, or we speak of the Holy Spirit's work in a believer's life in two ways. First there is the initial experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit. And secondly, there is the ongoing process of walking in the spirit, living in the realm of the spirit, letting the Holy Spirit take charge of our lives. The problem is some people are trying to walk in the spirit without first having that initial experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Tonight I am not primarily speaking of that ongoing process of walking and living in the realm of the spirit. That is important. That is critical and on other occasions I have emphasized that. Tonight I am talking about the initial experience that is the doorway into that life of walking in the spirit. I'm talking about that first experience which opens a whole new realm of living in the spirit and until you have that initial experience of being baptized with the Holy Spirit, it is very difficult for you to walk in the spirit.

It's a very specific experience. The hundred and twenty were gathered in the upper room. One moment they were not filled with the Holy Spirit and the next moment they were filled with the Holy Spirit. It happened that quickly. In a moment, in an instant.



One moment they were not filled with the Holy Spirit and the next instant they were filled with the Holy Spirit. It happened when God sovereignly in his grace poured out his spirit upon them and God filled them with his spirit. It was a very specific experience that happened in a moment of time. The rest of their lives they could always point back to that Day of Pentecost, when with the hundred and twenty, they were in the upper room and they could say that was the place that was the time, those were the people who were with me when I received the baptism with the Holy Spirit. That's where it happened. I was filled with the Holy Spirit on that occasion. It was a very specific experience.

The same is true with you tonight friend. When you are filled with the Holy Spirit you're going to know it. When you are filled with the Holy Spirit you are going to be able to point to the time and the place where it happened. It's an experience that is very specific and very definite. I can remember when I received the baptism with the Holy Spirit. I was a young boy about seven or eight years old. I was at children's camp. Some of you would know Clinton Ward, the children's evangelist. He was the evangelist. I can remember kneeling down at a bench in sawdust shavings – yes, I'm old enough to remember the old sawdust camp meetings. I can remember as clear as if it happened last night as a boy, kneeling down with a number of other boys, lifting my hands and beginning to pray and call out to God. I can remember the instant when the Holy Spirit came into my life and filled me. I'll never forget it. It was a very specific experience.

What I'm talking about tonight is not that ongoing process of living in the spirit. That is critical. That is essential. That is the logical conclusion to what we're talking about tonight. But before you get there, you have to have that initial experience of being filled with the Spirit of God. And when it happens friend, you'll know it. When God does something in your life, when the eternal God, God the Holy Spirit fills you, something happens within you and you know it has happened. God can't come in and take charge of your life and you not know it. You'll be filled with the Holy Spirit.

It's going to happen to some of you tonight. Some of you are going to come up to this altar at the end of this service, not to be embarrassed, not to be singled out, but

because you've got a hunger for God, you've got a desire and a thirst for the things of God and you want God, the Holy Spirit to come in and take control and take charge of your life and God is going to fill you with his Holy Spirit. If you'll reach out to God, he can do that for you tonight. This can be the night for the rest of your life you'll point back to and say that was the time that was the place, when God filled me with his Holy Spirit. The experience of Pentecost.

Then there's the evidence of Pentecost. Our text says all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit. That's the experience of Pentecost. The text goes on to say "and began to speak in other tongues as the spirit enabled them." That's the evidence of Pentecost. When God does something in your life you know it. There is some proof. There is some evidence. There are many evidences to Pentecost and all of them, underline that, all of them are important. I think the lifestyle of the believers in the New Testament is an example. It is an evidence of the fullness of the spirit. The fruit of the spirit in a believer's life is evidence of the presence and the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The gifts of the spirit as they operate in our lives, these are evidences of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

But there is one characteristic, one significant sign that is special, and it is unique and it stands out above the rest. It is special because it's biblical. It is special and important because it is in our text tonight. Notice again what it says. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues as the spirit enabled them. As the Holy Spirit came upon these hundred and twenty people, they began to speak in languages they had never learned. Again, this speaking in tongues was not something just a few of them did. The text tells us that this was something that they all did. We believe that the same pattern is true today. When a person is first filled with the Holy Spirit he will speak in tongues. And then that speaking in tongues becomes part of the ongoing process of prayer in that person's life. It's a prayer language that that person can use in intercession and in praise and in worship. When you experience the baptism with the Holy Spirit you will burst forth in a new language of praise and worship that is directed to God. Speaking in tongues is the one conclusive sign that tells you beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Holy Spirit has come upon you. There is no other sign, anywhere in

scriptures that can conclusively tell you that you have been filled with the Holy Spirit. Speaking in tongues is the evidence that is given in the scriptures.

It is interesting that the tongue is the most unruly member of our body. It is the most difficult part of our bodies to control. Isn't it interesting that when the Holy Spirit takes charge of us, when he takes control of us, as a sign that he has complete control of us, he takes control of the most difficult part of our body to control? He takes charge of our tongues.

It's important to note that the Holy Spirit did not speak in tongues. The Holy Spirit does not speak in tongues. The hundred and twenty spoke in tongues. They made their mouths move. They made the sounds. They did the speaking and they did not understand what they were saying. They were speaking a strange language, a language they had never learned. It probably sounded like nonsense and gobbledygook to them. When I first started to speak Chinese it sure sounded strange, strange until I learned what the words and sounds meant. And when you begin to speak in tongues it will sound like nonsense to you because it has no meaning. It has no intelligence to it because you are speaking a language that is given to you by God, a language that you have never learned. It is probably some human language somewhere in the world, but a language you have never learned so it is going to sound strange. They began to speak these strange languages.

It is very important to notice how it happened. They didn't sit around the room and say, well, we've been here for ten days, let's get a little excitement going here. Let's do something different. Let's all start speaking in languages we've never learned. Let's go. One, two, three, go! That's not what they did. They did not initiate this themselves. This was not of their own understanding or their own idea. They didn't try to do this on their own in any way. It says they began to speak in other tongues as the spirit enabled them. King James says "as the spirit gave them utterance." What does that mean? As they were praying in their own language suddenly there was an urging, a prompting in their spirit. There was something welling up within them, an urging to speak out, that prompting, that urging was the spirit's enablement. That was the Holy Spirit giving them the utterance. And as they felt that urging and that prompting that came from the Holy

Spirit, they cooperated with the Holy Spirit and they spoke in tongues as the spirit urged and prompted them and gave them the utterance. It wasn't something that they did on their own and it wasn't something the Holy Spirit did totally on his own. It was a cooperative balanced effort between what the Holy Spirit urged and prompted them to do and how they responded to what the Holy Spirit was doing.

You see, the Holy Spirit won't force you to do anything. But he will only urge you and prompt you and encourage you to respond to what he wants to do in your life. That is what is going to happen to you when you are filled with the Holy Spirit. As you reach out in worship and praise, as you seek God in prayer, there will come a moment when you feel that urging and that prompting as you hunger after the things of God. And as you hunger and reach out for the things of God you will feel that prompting. At that moment you respond. You take that step of faith. You step out in faith and say, "Lord, I trust you. I want whatever you have in store for me. I am reaching out to you." You respond to that urging and that prompting that the Holy Spirit gives you.

The Holy Spirit works in a variety of ways. Sometimes in the New Testament the Holy Spirit came on a group of people while Peter was preaching. Sometimes the Holy Spirit came as people prayed and laid hands on people. Sometimes they were just praying on their own and the Holy Spirit came upon them. There is no one way you can lock in and say that this is the way that God pours his Holy Spirit on people.

I recognize the diverse ways that the Holy Spirit works in people's lives. I recognize that and I'm very suspicious of people who say that these are the four steps to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. You can't put the Holy Spirit in a box like that. He's God. But I have learned a few things about the working of the spirit. If you're going to speak in tongues you are going to speak out loud, aren't you? You can't speak a language if you don't open your mouth and make some sounds. It's as simple as that. One of the things people need to learn to do, to put themselves in the place where the spirit can work in their lives, is to praise the Lord out loud in their own natural language. As you, in English, if English is your mother language, as you begin to worship and praise God out loud and you get accustomed to the sound of your own voice, as you begin to praise God, it is in that setting that you will feel the urging and the prompting of the spirit and

you will begin to respond and the Holy Spirit will fill you. It doesn't need to be loud. It doesn't need to be boisterous. The Holy Spirit is a perfect gentleman. Everything he does is always in order. He will never embarrass you in any way. You don't need to be afraid of the sound of your own voice. It's very right and very proper as you gather with other believers to just reach out and let the Holy Spirit take charge of your life and let him fill you.

It says 'they began'. I could preach a whole sermon on those two words. They began to do a lot of things. The point was Pentecost was not an end in itself. It was the beginning. Too many people, some who are gathered here tonight, have looked at the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as an end in itself rather than as a beginning. Pentecost is the beginning of letting the Holy Spirit guide and direct your life in fruitful service and in godly living that will enable you to touch other people with the love of Jesus Christ. It was a new beginning. But there has to be a starting place. It starts with the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

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