

# THE HOLY SPIRIT

June 15, 1958

In one of the ancient tombs of an Egyptian Pharaoh lies a mummy which is thirty-seven hundred years old. His tomb is painted with works of art and surrounding his body are bowls of perfumes, containers of wine, seeds, and other edibles in keeping with the custom and belief of his day. The mummy represents a life-like appearance, a testimony to their excellent facilities for preparing the dead. Yet, despite all the life-likeness, there is no life there.

In a church there can be all the trappings, the artful indications and necessary indices of life, but if it does not breathe with the power of the Holy Spirit . . . it is dead to the real import for which a church exists. Friends, today let us look at that hard-to-understand member of the Trinity—the Holy Spirit.

If we can track Him through what He does and how He does it, we shall better be informed as to how we can cooperate with Him . . . The occasion was Pentecost, that event in the first century where God opened the shutters of His nature and let man feel the size of His power. Certain conditions were met on man's part before it could happen, then human plus divine power resulted in an unparalleled awakening in the soul of man.

## THE HUMAN ROLE IN PENTECOST

The human role in any Pentecost can never be discounted. Without God man cannot, but usually without man God will not. The bend of ancient theology which said in so many words, "If God wants it done, let Him do it," was no more valid then than now. The human equation is always an important one in anything that God undertakes for man's benefit.

What did those first century people do that caused such a bursting forth of miraculous results? For one thing they were together in one place. A simple fact indeed yet history cries aloud in its testimony that God has never been able to do much with absenteeism. God would bring about many more pentecostal ex-

periences if the people did not forsake their assembling together. It is true that He can work through a single, solitary soul wherever He is and often does, but the fact remains that the corporate group represents a togetherness that is more than physical proximity. They got their heads together, as well as being assembled in body then they got their hearts together and this is the right combination for divine doings.

It is no mystery why many revival meetings have no visible results. Conversions, and adult ones at that, can't be effected unless the adult sinners are present, all the best preaching notwithstanding. There is a unity of purpose, power and spirit when we get together in His name. Naturally this togetherness gave rise to the other exalted virtue, a common sharing of what they had. This was no Communist robbing from the meritorious and giving to the slothful; rather, it was voluntary sharing on the part of the prosperous with those who had less. Love constrained such lives to share. Little wonder that they understood each other though many tongues were speaking at Pentecost, no wonder at all since love is the universal dictum, the one known language that is intelligible to all mankind.

Let no loud race baiter argue to the contrary since love has never been given an honest chance to play the field and prove its merit so far as the human race is concerned. If in our efforts to be religious we were half as concerned as being lovable, then the greatest force on earth would be leased, a force that would eclipse the explosive powers of nuclear fission.

## PETER STOOD UP

Luke's account says that after they got together in one place and were suffused with an attitude of expectancy, Peter stood up. That is saying a lot because Peter had no special endowment for standing up with one fine exception: he had seen another Young Man stand up for

him and that was inspiration enough. He stood up. Had he not opened his mouth that position would have been sermon indeed. It isn't easy to stand up at times; the real easy position is to remain seated. Don't be a counter just to be counted. Sit still as a spectator and let others do the participating. Don't get too involved in all the motion of Pentecostal religion; prefer to it the traditional, restrained and once a week type and all will go well. So reasons the rank and file. But Pentecost didn't happen to the rank and file. The noisy dens in Jerusalem knew nothing about the ecstatic rapture that was going on in that upper room. The commercial bazaars didn't cease their auctioning one iota when they heard that the Spirit had descended.

Another stood up and spoke his piece: Stephen. Yet he was a nobody . . . at least in the eyes of the Palestinian guard, that is, until some weaklings stood and watched his strength while he died for his faith. Then they got a sneaking notion that they, not he, were the nobodies.

This past winter as I returned from a speaking engagement in the West our plane circled over the Atlanta airport for forty-five minutes before we could land. It wasn't the busy traffic that held us aloft but a heavy fogbank that hovered right over the field making landing conditions a hazardous uncertainty. While idling up there among the bright sunshine I looked down on that dark, smoggy fog bank and thought how like too many who claim identification with Christ. The Holy Spirit like the sun rays could illuminate the field of life and make landing a perfect affair. But other times the church is like a fogbank and the Spirit can do nothing in that church because of the low ceiling and its related hazards.

#### THE DIVINE ROLE IN PENTECOST

When the human conditions were met then the divine role became apparent. God invaded their hearts with frightened power and things really happened. Things that defied description . . . things that exceeded their own expectations. Oh, what marvelous results when man plus God work in harmonious concert. Things turn out right.

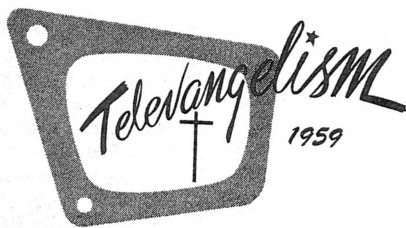
It is not easy, however, to explain the nature of the Holy Spirit.

As a matter of fact, if man could give an adequate description of the Holy Spirit he would be a superman and the Spirit would be less than God. Yet, the Bible is replete with emblems of the third person of the Trinity. He is likened unto water. Water that cleanses, fertilizes, refreshes. In another passage the Spirit is like fire: purifying, illuminating, searching. Then like wind: independent, powerful, sensible in effects. Like oil: healing, comforting, consecrating. He works like rain and dew; refreshing, abundant, imperceptible. Gentle as a dove, He is meek, innocent, forgiving. The Spirit is a voice speaking, guiding, warning, teaching. Then as a seal, impressing, securing, authenticating . . .

The power of the Spirit has never been measured, weighed or surmised. One breath of God would erase and create simultaneously. Being invisible it fits into that category of the most powerful forces. Free of atoms and protons in His composition, He has the range of all existent universes as the domain for His activity. He makes our little steel arms look puny in comparison.

One day the manager of a granite quarry told us that he could lift an acre of granite, ten feet thick to any height by using compressed air. But the same man did not believe in the reality or the power of the Holy Spirit. What an absurd contradiction! To say that thin air under compression could lift an acre of granite while denying the lifting pow-

*Get Ready for*



ers of God's Holy Spirit on the granite-like hearts of unbelieving man is a manifest contradiction.

The results at Pentecost remain in Biblical history as the real proof of God's omnipotence. Changed lives were left in the wake of this divine hurricane. "They ate their bread with gladness of heart," where previously they had eaten with gluttonous acquisition and vacuum hearts. ers of God's Holy Spirit on the granite-

like hearts of unbelieving man is a manifest contradiction.

The results at Pentecost remain in Having favor with all men, they talked, prayed, cried, laughed, and worked for a world in which all could share their Pentecostal experience.

Can that happen to us today? Precisely! It not only can but it is happening . . . but only to those who can recognize it when it does happen.

## THE NATURE OF HELL

June 22, 1958

"If Christian faith did not require a belief in hell, then I would be a Christian," said a keen student. This statement represents the current reasoning among many people. Friends, today as we look at the nature of hell as taught in the Bible, let us face many of the false notions, the superstitious accretions that have gathered around Biblical sayings through the centuries and let us honestly try to separate the truth from the hearsay.

Is belief in hell fundamental to Christian faith? Anyone who knows the Bible at all must answer with unhesitating certainty, yes, belief is essential in the fundamentals. If one is to accept only what strikes his reasoning as logical or pleasing while deleting what he doesn't like or agree with, then his religion is not that which was practiced by Jesus Christ. Heaven and hell are taught as the logical ends of good and evil personalities.

### RECONCILE HELL

The very idea of hell strikes a revolting chord in the minds of many. They ask with searching pointedness, "How do you reconcile a hell of torments with a loving God?" This question through history has been raised innumerable times and the frequent raising of it has given rise to many sects and cults who, being unable to answer it honestly, decided to ignore the whole affair by denying its existence.

Yet, I can deny the fact that malignancy exists in the human body because I do not understand it and certainly do not endorse its existence. Many would

think me foolish, however, if I did deny the existence of cancer. The same is true of belief in hell. No one likes the idea but to deny its reality on the basis of dislike is absurd.

Is hell a place or a state of mind or both? In one sense of the word hell is a state of mind. The mind of man can become such a cauldron of confusion, interwoven with conflicting desires and passions, interlaced with inordinate ambitions, interlarded with the fat of foolishness inasmuch that the mind is much like hell. Sin can indwell the mind like a pestilence while all sense of decency and moral sensitivity can be lost. This, then, is hell in human form. Anyone who has tried to sail on that troubled mental sea where the waves are monotonously nauseating knows that the mind can be a tormenting prison.

### LOVE, MERCY, JUSTICE

A Christian's faith is grounded on God's love, mercy, and justice—but all three! Some would leave the impression that God is love and nothing else. God is a supreme, spiritual personality Who loves and wills that mankind should love, but to think of God merely as an exalted virtue, even one as highly exalted as love, is to miss the nature of His real self. God is a loving Father but His love has the dimension of mercy and justice. His justice sees to it that man who lives like hell shall have the appropriate place in which to live when this life is over. That is no sadistic arrangement any more than it is a gleeful fact for me to mention.