

# KEEP IT REAL

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115 years ago God began to break through in the lives of tens of thousands of believers from around the world.

In America, it was rooted in the holiness movement of John Wesley, among the Methodists, that evoked a hunger for more of God and emphasized evangelism and service.

In Topeka, Kansas, a small Bible school for evangelists, led by Charles Parham, was the firing pin for the “shot heard ‘round the world.” After an intensive study of the Book of Acts, the student body concluded that the evidentiary witness of Jesus’ predicted baptism with the Holy Spirit was the miraculous spontaneous ability to speak a language that had not been learned (speaking in other tongues) in worship and prayer to God.

During an all-night prayer meeting on New Year’s Eve, 1900, shortly after midnight, one young student, Agnes Ozman, began to speak in what sounded like a Chinese dialect. So overwhelmed by the presence of the Spirit of God, Agnes was unable to speak in English for three days. Hunger broke out as classes were cancelled and prayer continued.

Many other students, and Parham himself, received the Holy Spirit baptism. They began to carry this message and experience to their preaching outposts. At an extension school in Houston, Texas, one student, William Seymour, believed the message, though he had not yet received the experience. When he was called to pastor a church in Los Angeles, he preached the message of the baptism with the Holy Spirit with strong conviction, and God began to break in to the meetings. Many received the baptism and began speaking in languages the Spirit gave.

The Azusa Street Mission became a tinder box. People hungry for God, came from across the nation and around the world, for God was moving powerfully, with signs and wonders and miracles. It was a restoration of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

The Mission conducted three services each day, seven days a week, for three and a half years. Informal prayers, worship and testimonies filled in the spaces between services, such that the doors were never shut and the building was never empty. Some have called it “A Thousand Days and Nights of Revival.”

Thus began the modern Pentecostal movement that has swelled to over 600,000 participants around the world.

A second refreshing, known as the Charismatic Movement, began in 1960, carrying this move of the Spirit into many denominations previously indifferent or opposed to the Pentecostal awakening, including Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, and Baptists. This supported the college student awakenings in the late 60s and the Jesus Movement of the 70s and the Vineyard movement of the 80s.

As recently as last week, 60-75 thousand people gathered in Los Angeles to pray for a fresh wave of the Spirit in America.

2 Timothy 3:1-5

*<sup>1</sup> You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. <sup>2</sup> For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. <sup>3</sup> They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. <sup>4</sup> They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. <sup>5</sup> They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!*

In the face of increasing violence, division, faithlessness, and indifference—both in our culture and globally—hunger for a fresh move of God is stirring. William Seymour is known to have prophesied another awakening to come, 100 years later, that would eclipse the Azusa revival and reach around the world. However, three warnings accompanied the predictions of that great Pentecostal movement to come. On the eve of such an awakening, we ought to heed those warnings carefully.

Here is the text of the prophetic warning: “In the last days, three things will happen in the great Pentecostal movement. There will be an over-emphasis on power, rather than of righteousness. There will be an over-emphasis on praise to a God they no longer pray to. There will be an over-emphasis on the gifts of the Spirit, rather than on the lordship of Christ.”

Let’s consider what these might look like, and what they could mean.

### **Power Over Righteousness**

*“But I warn you—unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven! (Matthew 5:20)*

The issue that separates man from God is not weakness, but SIN.

This issue is resolved not by Spirit-building workouts, but by REPENTANCE toward God.

Divine power is not the result of our righteousness, but of faith. However, it is character (righteousness) that sustains gifts of power.

### **Praise Without Prayer**

*He said to them, “The Scriptures declare, ‘My Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations,’ but you have turned it into a den of thieves.” (Mark 11:17)*

Praise is the exaltation of God, the illumination of His character, the enjoyment of His grace.

But we have a tendency to make praise ABOUT US—our benefits, what we have received, what God has promised to do for us. And we can focus on the experience we have in praise—forgetfulness of our problems and issues.

Prayer is the uncomfortable and difficult pathway to the heights of praise. Without the self-effacing impact of prayer, praise remains at the level of self-centered childishness.

While God is present in our praises, He is active because of our PRAYERS—not just by the things we say in prayer, but by the very act of praying—regular, faithful praying, whether verbal or silent.

### **Gifts Without Lordship**

*<sup>22</sup> God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. <sup>23</sup> And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself. (Ephesians 1:22-23)*

Many have imagined that supernatural gifts are an evidence of God’s approval, a badge of merit, and a sign that we have “arrived.” This has overshadowed or displaced our need to remain submitted to Him who is the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The fact is that they are “gifts” and cannot be earned or deserved.

But their effectiveness is SUSTAINED BY OUR SUBMISSION to Christ, who did only what He saw the Father doing and spoke only what the Father gave Him to say.

If we are to keep it real in these last days, we will do well to heed these warnings, and concentrate on righteousness (the demonstration of the character of Jesus in relationships), prayer (spending time in yielded conversations with God), and the lordship of Jesus (making Jesus pre-eminent in our thoughts, decisions, words, and actions).