

The Cross and Power for Service .

by Jessie Penn-Lewis

Jessie Penn-Lewis emphasizes the integral role of the Cross in receiving the Holy Spirit's power for effective Christian service.

Scripture: John 14:20, Acts 1:5, Ephesians 2:13

Topics: "The Cross", "Power for Service"

Description

Jessie Penn-Lewis emphasizes the centrality of the Cross in understanding the enduement of power for service in the life of a believer. She explains that many Christians seek the power of the Holy Spirit without first experiencing the deep work of the Cross and the Resurrection, which are essential for true effectiveness in witnessing for Christ. By examining the historical events of Calvary, the Resurrection, and Pentecost, she highlights that the true meaning of these events is revealed through the Apostle Paul's epistles, which provide insight into the believer's union with Christ. Penn-Lewis urges believers to seek a profound understanding of their identity in Christ, which leads to a dynamic and effective service empowered by the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, she concludes that the Cross is the foundation for unity among believers, enabling the Holy Spirit to work through them.

Transcript

T HERE are so many lines of teaching on the enduement of power for service that numbers of the Lord's children are perplexed, and, in some cases hindered from receiving what they need, to equip them for effective witnessing to Christ. The trouble lies in the fact that in this, as in many other aspects of truth, the Cross is not given its right place as the central point from which the Holy Spirit works.

The consequence is that one-sided truth is given on the subject, coloured generally by the experience of the teacher. The grace and patience of God, however, is seen in the way that He bears witness to all that is 'truth', in any degree, even when it is given without due regard to other aspects of it.

Let us take the Word, and with the Cross as the 'fixed point' from which we are seeking to view every subject, see what light we can get in the matter.

First let me say definitely that there is an 'enduement of power' for service, which every believer should know for effectiveness in life and service. If we look back into the history of those who have been greatly used by God Moody, Finney and others-you will find that there was a moment in their lives when God dealt with them and gave them an enduement of power.

Then let us look broadly at the fact of 'Pentecost' from the historical viewpoint. Historically there is only one 'Calvary', one 'Resurrection Day', one 'Pentecost'; i.e., Calvary, where Christ died on the Cross; the Resurrection, when He arose from the dead; Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came into the Church.

Calvary is not to be repeated, nor the Resurrection, nor Pentecost in its historical meaning. The finished work of Christ on the Cross, His glorious resurrection as the witness of the Father to the completeness of His finished work, had the outcome in the outpoured Spirit at Pentecost. All was final, and pivotal in completeness as carried out by the Son of God, through the Eternal Spirit.

But now in the experience of the Church, each one who becomes a member of that Church (i.e., the mystical organism of the Body of Christ), puts in his claim to all that (1) Calvary means for him, (2) all that the Resurrection means for him, and, logically, (3) all that Pentecost means for him.

Now carry the analogy further: in appropriating our part in all that 'Calvary' means, we do not expect the external historical facts to be repeated in us. We put in our claim for all that it means to have our sins borne by Christ, and to be crucified with Christ, but we do not expect an external 'Cross' with all the accompanying tragic events of Golgotha. Nor do we expect a visible corporeal 'resurrection' exactly like the Lord coming out of the tomb although we shall have a resurrection of the body by and by. Why then expect all the historical externalities of Pentecost to take place in us? Is not the present dispensation of the Spirit a spiritual one, during which God is calling out a people for His Name, and building a spiritual temple as far in advance of the visible Temple as the sun above the moon?

What then is the spiritual and inside meaning of Calvary, the Resurrection and Pentecost, as they are to be known by the Church of God? If we are not to have the 'externalities' of these wondrous events carried out in us, where shall we learn their inner application to us?

First as explained by the Lord Himself before His death, and second as explained by the Lord Himself after His death, when, as the Risen and Ascended Conqueror, He chose an instrument on earth through whom He could reveal the spiritual meaning of the historical facts of His death, resurrection and ascension. It is in the epistles of Paul that we get the inside meaning of it all. For the glorified Lord chose the Apostle Paul to be the revelator to the Church, as Moses was God's revelator to Israel. He was chosen to give out to the world Christ's explanation of Calvary, and Christ's explanation of the resurrection, and Christ's explanation of Pentecost, as He foreshadowed it in germ before He died. Therefore all that Calvary is for us, all that the Resurrection means to us, and all that Pentecost means to us, is to be learnt in the Epistles of Paul, and not so much from the historical records of the Acts of the Apostles.

Let me emphasize here the importance of our remembering when we read Paul's epistles, that all his teachings were directly given hint by the Ascended Christ. Say to yourself as you read, This is not Paul's idea of Calvary, and the Blood, but the glorified Christ in heaven explaining His own Cross, explaining His own resurrection, and what it meant to the Church, and also explaining the coming of the Holy Ghost, and His work in the believer, and in the Church.

We must therefore go to the Epistles to learn the true inside meaning of the enduement of power, and as we do so remember to keep always together the triple group of the (1) Cross, the (2) Resurrection, and (3) Pentecost, for the obtaining of the full power of either. Also let us remember the sequence of God's dealing with us is in this order. Let us pray for the deepest work of the Cross to be applied to us, the fullest power of the resurrection, and the mightiest enduement of the Holy Spirit for service, that is possible for us to know.

It is because believers seek for their share of 'Pentecost' without the deep bedrock work of the Cross, and the Resurrection, first wrought in them, that the devil as an angel of light has broken in upon believers with his counterfeits. If the Cross had been preached and known in all its aspects, the devil would not have been able to deceive, as he is doing, so many children of God. But the majority of Christians look upon the Cross only as a place for the forgiveness of sins, where they get right with God. Then they cry for a 'Pentecostal' enduement, without first asking for a deep work of the Spirit, in the old Adam life being nailed to the Cross, and rendered inoperative. This is the only safe basic position for asking for an enduement of power. In the face of the spiritual perils of to-day through the outbreak of spiritism, it might mean disaster to many if we were given a floodtide of the Holy Ghost in Revival power, when the bedrock meaning of Calvary is so little known. This may be the reason it is withholden by our Father in heaven.

Now let us look at the Lord's explanation of Pentecost, before He died. This we find summarised in a few sentences in John 14: 20- "AT THAT DAY YE SHALL KNOW THAT I AM IN my FATHER, AND YE IN ME." 'That day,' the context tells us, was the Day of Pentecost. His disciples listening to these words had walked the earth with Christ, and had seen Him and known Him as a Man; after His resurrection they would see Him again as a Man, but with a resurrection body. They were to handle Him and see for themselves that He had 'flesh and bones' as a Man, proving a real physical resurrection. They were to see this Man ascend before their eyes into the heavens, whilst they were left on earth. But a 'Day' would come when they would know the inside spiritual meaning of it all. At His ascension they knew that He had gone up to God. But there was more. "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in Me." The Holy Spirit would reveal to them that they were in God also-that the Ascended Lord had taken them with Him in spirit back to God. "Christ died, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Not only reconcile us to God, but in spirit re-unite us with God. The severance caused by the Fall is removed. Through the Cross the fallen Adam is crucified, "For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." When 'that Day' came, by the Holy Ghost they would know their source of life to be changed. They would understand they had died with Christ, and were translated out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son.

We therefore gather from the Lord's words, that the great inner meaning of Pentecost, is the Holy Spirit making real to you your union with the Ascended Christ. This is in harmony with the order we have already seen-Calvary, Resurrection, Pentecost. You first know your union with the crucified Christ, then your union with the Risen Christ, and then your union with the Ascended Lord in the bosom of the Father, which according to John 14: 20 is 'Pentecost'. When the Holy Ghost came, the 120 knew experimentally what Calvary, Resurrection and Pentecost meant. They knew they had died with their Lord, they knew they were joined to Him, and taken with Him unto God. Their entire outlook was changed in the upper room. From the moment the Holy Ghost came they looked out at the world from the Throne of God. They understood the Lord's words, "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you" (John 20: 21). They had been taken 'back to God', and were now 'sent' from God to proclaim His message to the world.

This is practically the 'endowment of power' as foreshadowed by the Lord. It really means that by the influx of the Holy Spirit into your spirit, it has found its centre. You are no longer 'self-centred', but God-centred. It is when we are thus taken back, in union with the Ascended Lord, to God the Father, that the Spirit of God is able to work out through us all that He wants to do. It is then that it may be said of you, as of Gideon, "The Spirit of the Lord clothed Himself with Gideon, and Gideon blew a trumpet!" It means not only the Holy Spirit in the believer, but the believer IN GOD, and therefore covered or clothed by Him. This is what is promised in Luke 24: 49. The disciples were told to wait until the Holy Spirit had come, when they would be 'clothed' with power from on high-power which would make them know they were with

Christ in God.

Again the Lord said, "and I in you". The last is the result of the first condition. (1) 'I am in My Father,' (2) 'ye are in Me', and (3) 'I in you'. This means dynamic power. What use to talk of having received a 'power' that accomplishes nothing? 'Power'-real power-is known by its effects and not by its noise! When the believer is deeply anchored in his divine centre, 'with Christ in God' he moves in an orbit of His will all the day long, as the planets move in their orbit in the heavens. Nothing is lost, or ineffective, when God is the moving force of your life, as you abide in Him. Centred in God the believer does not have to strain or struggle, but abiding in God he simply moves on with Him, accomplishing hour by hour, and day by day, the carrying out of God's plan for his life. When he is bidden to do 'big things', he is not conscious that it is he who does them. There is no sense of 'burden' under the heaviest burdens. He moves with God, and when he is bidden to act, he acts also with God, for God moves in and with him, therefore God is responsible, for He carries the burden, as the believer carries out His will.

'I IN YOU' is the outcome of thus being centred with Christ in God. When this is realized, there is relief from self-consciousness. The Holy Spirit clothing the believer makes the indwelling of Christ so real that he forgets himself, and how he acts. He is moving in an eternal element, not only within but around him, which makes him 'at home' everywhere. Thus he, so to speak, carries his own atmosphere with him. This is what David realized when he said, "If I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there!" Even in the midst of those opposed to Christ, we carry our own atmosphere with us. What a contrast this life in God, with its ease and 'naturalness', and the 'mechanical', kind of life many Christians are trying to live. They have such a 'process' for keeping it up, and maintaining 'communion' and spirituality, that they have no time to think about saving the world!

But God would get the whole use of you, and every minute of your time, if you knew the blessed life of being joined to the Living Lord, and hidden with Him in God, so that, centred in God, He holds you, and in Him you live and move and have your being.

Now for a moment pass on to Acts 2 and read it in the light of John 14: 20, for, as we have seen, it is the Lord's foreshadowing of what would occur to the disciples inwardly, when the Holy Ghost came down, and filled the house where they were sitting. God's children have been so occupied with the externalities of Pentecost in the tongues of fire and the power of utterance, that they have not sufficiently searched for light from other parts of Scripture upon the inward working of God on 'that Day'. The disastrous consequence of this is, that many have sought for the external manifestations which took place at Pentecost, with no knowledge of the deep inner life of union foreshadowed as the inward result of the coming of the Holy Spirit 'at that day'. The disciples knew, as the Spirit of God came, that Christ was GOD in very truth, that the Man they had seen go up into heaven had reached the unseen Father, and was, as He had said, 'in the Father' One with Him. VERY GOD OF VERY GOD. And they knew, as only those taught of the Holy Ghost know, that they were joined to the Ascended Lord, in the union of essence which is only possible to spirit, and they were one with Him in God. 'One in us' (John 17: 21) said the Lord. And they knew, too, that the Risen Christ, mystically, was also in them.

To perceive and experience this suddenly, as it is possible so to do, they must have also seen clearly the effect of the Cross as the cause of this. The 'Baptism' they suddenly received, was a baptism into the death of Christ, for their spirits to be released for (1) the joining with Him in His ascension life in God, and the release of their spirit to be (2) the channel of the outflow of the Holy Ghost.

Now let us pass on to the epistles, and see whether they confirm and throw further light upon the meaning of Pentecost, and whether the Ascended Lord through His revelator -Paul-re-affirms, and enlarges upon, His foreshadowing of Pentecost on the eve of His death. We have not time to trace this all out in the Epistles. We can only turn to I Corinthians 12: 13, where we have, in one verse again, the Risen Lord's description through Paul, of what took place at Pentecost. With this difference, that in John 14: 20, He (I) foreshadows the God-ward side, and in I Corinthians 12: 13 (2) the outworking of the Spirit, in and through the Church-the mystical Body of Christ-communicating the life and Spirit of its Head.

Let us read verses 12 and 13- "As the [natural] body is one ... and as all the members ... are one body, so also is Christ [the mystical Christ made up of Head and members]. For in the communion of one Spirit we were all baptized [Greek, immersed] into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, slaves or free men, and were all made to drink of the same

Spirit." The Speaker's Commentary says, 'drenched with one Spirit'. The enduement of power at Pentecost is manifestly to be seen here. The context explains the way the Triune God (verses 4 to 6), works out through the members of the Body. John 14: 20 shows the believers at Pentecost in their union with the Lord taken into God, now we see the work of the Holy Spirit forming all thus united to Christ, into the spiritual organism of the Church. They were 'immersed in spirit' according to the analogy of John the Baptist baptizing men into the water as the element. (See the promise of Acts I : 5-) Immersed in Spirit, all in the upper room drank of the same Spirit, Who thus produced the union foreshadowed in John 14: 20.

The principal word to emphasize in I Corinthians 12: 13 is the word 'into'. In John 14: 20 Christ said 'Ye in Me', and in I Corinthians 12: 13 we find the Holy Ghost doing this work of placing believers into Christ, in essential union, as members of His Body. The emphasis at Pentecost should therefore be, not on the external and incidental manifestations, but on the internal and spiritual meaning of the Coming of the Holy Ghost, leaving to Him the external outworking 'according to His will' (see I Corinthians 12: 18).

Now let us go back to the Acts of the Apostles to see the results of the Pentecostal enduement, in some special characteristics of their service. Consider first the word 'power', of Acts 1: 5 (and Luke 24: 49)- It is in Greek 'dunamis'-the word from which we get our English word 'dynamite'. This Greek word, points out a skilled Greek scholar, means 'inherent power'-not so much power put forth, as power possessed. It means, among other things, 'ability' and 'capability'. just as if the Lord said to His disciples, "You are now quite incapable, but when the Holy Ghost is come, you shall be made capable of doing what I want you to do". But the idea of the power of Pentecost is quite different to this. It is thought about as something miraculous, accomplishing spectacular miracles through the one who obtains it! And yet it is not so. How 'incapable' many are, who even testify to a 'baptism of power'. And how 'incapable' the majority of Christians are in the smallest service for God. Incapable Sunday school teachers. Incapable Bible Class leaders. Incapable workers, or no workers at all. And often it is because these 'incapable' souls think that a 'Baptism of power' means miraculous gifts, and not God just making them 'capable' in the work for Him that lies close to their hand. The 'miraculous gifts' may be given, but only so far as needed for increased 'capability'.

Now using the word 'power' as being made 'capable' or 'effective', for doing the will of God in any aspect of life or service, let us think (i) of the power of effective utterance. Peter was given this so that there were three thousand souls pricked to the heart through his first sermon. What an amount of teaching and preaching exists, even of Gospel truth, that is ineffective and carries no weight! It has, as one has said, no 'carrying power'. It does not go any further than those who hear it. Then see how dependent many

preachers and teachers are on their 'Notes', but look at Peter, and observe how he was made 'capable' of wielding the Word of God. See how the texts of the Old Testament came to him, and how he 'combined' spiritual things with spiritual. He could not have 'thought out' of his own mind such a comprehensive panoramic survey of the Scriptures concerning Christ, and put them into such a condensed form. He was given by his immersion in the Spirit, a clarified mind, a quickened memory, and 'made capable' of being God's messenger on that wonderful day, i.e., he was not merely a 'mouthpiece' but an intelligent co-worker with God.

Then notice (2) the characteristic of the enduement of power in boldness of testimony. You may have a message of vital truth, but if you are 'timid' and self-conscious in giving it out, it is not effective. There must be, in giving God's message, an accent of bold certainty. We are not to be positive over any 'view' of truth, but about what God says. Our business is to declare the Word of God, not 'views' of it. You can be 'bold' over this, for the Holy Spirit will co-witness with your declaration of 'Thus saith the Lord'.

And (3) the enduement of power is needed for business. See Acts 6: 3. "Look ye out seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, that we may appoint over this business". This can be your own 'business', as well as the 'business' of the Church, if your 'business' is in the will of God for you. We read that David became 'skilful in business' after he had received the anointing. A business man in London said to me once, "You do not know very much about business, but you do the very things unconsciously that would be accounted the highest wisdom in business"! Yes, the Holy Spirit knows 'business', and can guide you so that you have no muddle in your business affairs. I was once speaking with a man of business about the opportunities he had in his particular business to do great things for the kingdom of God, but he replied, "That is all right, but I have to get my bread and-butter"! But the Lord will see that you get the 'bread and-butter', if you seek first the kingdom of God in your earthly affairs. Alas, alas, how the devil is entangling Christian business men today, so as to paralyse them in the work of God, and destroy their influence. Why should we call 'preaching' a greater thing than 'business'? Does it not depend upon what is the plan of God for you?

Then there is (4) the enduement of power as manifested in the ordinary life. "Be filled with the indwelling of the Spirit when you speak to one another . . ." (Ephesians 5: 18, 19). Here we have effective conversation, so that God uses you in all your daily contact with others. Then we find power given for 'contending for the faith'. Paul increased in strength for 'confounding the Jews' as he sought to prove to them that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 9: 22. See also Acts 7). Controversy must not be shirked when it is necessary for the maintenance of truth. Truth must never be sacrificed for peace. Stephen and Paul were both endued with power for this work.

Then (5) there is the being made capable to meet Satanic powers. This we see in the story of Paul and the sorcerer. When he met this man, and Satan withstood him, Paul steadily resisted him, and rebuked the demon in him, just as he did the girl with the spirit of divination. The Apostle in the latter case did not speak in a moment. He bore with the poor deceived soul, until the influx of the Spirit of God arose in his spirit.

If you are centred in God, and walking with Him, you will find, too, that as you come against the power of darkness in some specific way, the Spirit of God will at the right moment rise in you in divine strength to deal with it. Paul knew the moment to turn round upon the demon and say, "I command thee in the Name of Jesus Christ to come out of her".

Notice (6) the 'discernment of spirits' which Paul had. He discerned the evil spirit in the girl, and in the sorcerer. This is not the 'gift' of perception, or discernment, but power to tell the difference between 'spirits'. Our time will not allow more, but you can see in I Cor. 12 the working of the Holy Ghost in the members of the Body of Christ, making one and the other 'capable' for the carrying out of the will of God.

In conclusion, let us go back to the Cross as the basis of all that we have spoken of. Let us turn from the union with Christ in His life, and the enduement of power by immersion in the Holy Spirit, to see once more the place of the Cross in the work of the Spirit, in carrying out all those purposes of God.

In I Corinthians 12: 13 we read, "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body whether we be Jews or Gentiles. . . . " Jews and Gentiles we read in Ephesians 2:14, had a 'wall of partition' between them. How could they both become members of Christ's Mystical Body, and be made to 'drink of one Spirit'? Only through the Cross. Therefore the Cross stands as the basis of John 14: 20 and Acts 2. The Cross lies at the base of the UNITY OF THE BODY, and only so far as the deep work of the Cross is known can the members of the Body be welded together in the drinking of one Spirit. Let us read Ephesians 2: 13-17. "Now, in Christ Jesus, ye, who were once far off, have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, Who has made both one, and has broken down the wall which parted us; for, in His flesh, He destroyed the ground of our enmity ... that He might create in Himself one new man; and that, By His Cross He might reconcile both, in one body, unto God, having slain their enmity thereby."

The place of unity between Christians to-day is clearly the Cross. And this by its destroying all ground of enmity between those for whom Christ died. Between Jew and Gentile the barrier was that of 'ordinances'. But crucified with Christ, the 'Jew' ceases to be a Jew, the Gentile ceases to be a Gentile. And, shall we say, the 'Baptist' ceases to be a Baptist, the Wesleyan a Wesleyan, and so on. All these externalities may exist, and be conformed to, but they belong to the external life only, because each regenerate believer is inwardly a member of the Body of Christ, part of a New Creation, which is neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, but a 'New Man' consisting of Christ the Head of His members.

It is very important that in practice the children of God understand the two positions: externally the earthly position, with earthly relationships, and inwardly the heavenly position in Christ. Here in this Conference, we are neither Wesleyans nor Baptists nor Church of England, nor Jews, nor Gentiles. We are all one in Christ Jesus. But when, for example, one goes back to his own sphere, he is a Baptist Minister, loyal and faithful to his section of the church. We need to remember the heavenly position, and when to act according to it; and the home or business position, and when to act in harmony with it. e.g., In your heavenly position you may be a leader, in your 'home' position you may be a 'subordinate'. To-day the Church of God needs to set an example of law-abiding faithfulness. 'Lawlessness' is abroad. Servants unfit to lead are seeking to be 'masters', and 'masters' are failing in leadership also, showing themselves unworthy of the name. The word 'servant' is being cast aside as something derogatory. It is for the Church to lift it again to its place of dignity. We should be 'kings' in our heavenly position, and on earth the servants of all. We have not got ideal churches to-day, and so the path is difficult, but let us remember that God is a God of order, and His children must not become a perpetual cause of disturbance in their homes, or their churches.

THE CROSS IS THE PLACE OF UNITY, because there the old Adam life in the Jew and the Gentile is crucified, and God created a 'new man' in Christ Jesus. How the Cross breaks down the old Adam life in its 'wall of partition', dividing Christian from Christian I once saw in a Conference near Berlin (Germany). Leading Christian workers had gathered from every part of Germany for a three-days Conference. At the

first meeting I gave a message, by translation, on the subject of the Cross as set forth in Ephesians 2. On this occasion I spoke a Sentence,. then quietly waited, and listened whilst the German was given , the pauses rendering the message more effective-until suddenly a sister arose from the audience, and said something in German. I waited. Then she turned, and directed her words to someone at the back, and this person arose and began to shake hands with another person. Then I saw that God was working and taking hold of the meeting. So I sat and watched, and had no further opportunity to speak. The whole of the Conference proceeded to settle up affairs with one another. The weeping and the 'reconciliations' were most touching. The result was that after an hour or so Of this blessed evidence of the power of the Cross to 'slay' the 'enmity' between children of God, the Conference broke up, and away went the workers in the woods around, some of them arm in arm with those they had not spoken to for years. After this we truly had a flood-tide of blessing. The 'fire of the Lord' fell. We continued on the theme of the Cross from one aspect, and another, until we reached the point where we might safely seek the enduement for service. More than half of those present came forward, and flung themselves down by the platform, asking God that there and then there should come into their spirits the true influx of the Holy Ghost. And He came.

In every place that some of these workers went to from that Conference, they had Revival. In village after village, and even in deaconess houses they stayed in for the night, it broke out. God had really come down! This proves that the Holy Ghost needs unity between believers ere He can work, and that this real unity comes through the Cross.

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