

Harold Horton (1881-1969)

by Keith Malcomson

The sermon explores the life and ministry of Harold Horton, highlighting his transformation, advocacy for Pentecostal beliefs, and lasting impact on the church.

Scripture: Acts 1:8, Acts 2:4, 1 Corinthians 2:4, 1 Corinthians 14:18, Jude 1:3

Topics: "Pentecostal Movement", "Holy Spirit"

Description

Keith Malcomson shares the inspiring journey of Harold Horton, a Methodist preacher who surrendered his life to Christ at a young age and later experienced a powerful transformation after encountering the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit through preacher Smith Wigglesworth. Horton's ministry was marked by simplicity, power, and a deep commitment to the Pentecostal movement, leading him to write influential works on the Gifts of the Spirit and defend key Pentecostal doctrines. Despite facing opposition, Horton remained steadfast in his beliefs, emphasizing scriptural clarity and a forward movement in the Assembly of God churches.

Transcript

Harold Horton was born in Wrexham, North Wales to parents who were godly Methodists. At the age of 20 Harold surrendered his life and future to Christ. It was not very long before he felt a call to be involved in the ministry. He passed the denominational exams aged 21 and became a local preacher with the Wesleyan Methodist Church. This meant he travelled the local circuit of churches in North Wales preaching and ministering. He ministered for 20 years with the Methodists. In later years he worked in John Duxbury's School of Elocution in West London. Among those to whom he gave elocution lessons, were Members of Parliament, actors and Ministers.

Many of Horton's fellow minister's were being deeply affected by Modernism and Horton did not escape the influence from these new movements in Methodism. Many of his contemporaries were setting their sails and allowing these new winds of doctrine to carry them unto rocks of heresy. There were those in this movement who felt they had come of age, grown up and moved on from old fashioned and traditional Methodist beliefs. Everything was being challenged and cast aside. The doctrine of man's absolute depravity; the absolute authority of God's written Word; the absolute necessity for a sinner to be washed in the Blood; an eternal place of suffering for Christ rejecters; were all being cunningly undermined. New intelligent, articulate and elegant leaders rose up. Higher criticism and modernism denied the supernatural and intellect explained everything away.

Although Horton was gifted, educated and eloquent, yet he was far from God. He had been suffering from a double rupture for about two years which caused great suffering in his body. This opened him up to the teachings of Christian Science which was the brain child of Mary Baker Eddy. When one of his pupils invited him to hear a Preacher called Smith Wigglesworth he willingly went. The supernatural gifts were in operation and the gathered host of nearly 2,000 people listened to the preacher in an ordered earnest manner. It was the plumber from Bradford. No education and no natural eloquence, but what he did have was the Word of God in his mouth and an endowment of power from on high. He preached simply, clearly and powerfully. That night Horton turned his heart again to Christ and believed the simple words of the Gospel. Also he was instantly healed in his body and filled with the Holy Spirit speaking in a new tongue as the Spirit gave him utterance.

As he began a fresh in Christ he preached the gospel in pure simplicity and power seeing individuals saved and healed. Through the meetings in Sion College Howard Carter got to know Harold and so invited him to be a tutor at the Hampstead Bible School lecturing in French, English and various Bible studies. In March 1927 his first message was published in Redemption Tidings from the book of Jude called 'Stand Fast' - a warning to stand fast amidst apostasy and coming false teachers. From then on there was an increasing stream of articles printed in Redemption Tidings.

Then in June 1927, Stephen Jeffreys conducted a great campaign in Louth where many sinners wept their way to Calvary and out of which a church was birthed. Furthermore, Howard Carter organised a four month Bible School which led to the founding of the women's Bible College in Louth. The following year, Harold went to Pastor the Louth church in conjunction with the Bible School Evangelistic Society and assisted John Carter at the women's Bible School. John Carter was often on the move so the daily running of the School was left in Harold's hands. His ministry became known further afield leading to many open doors. In late 1928 The Louth Bible School moved to new premises in Scarborough and Harold went as Principal and also to Pastor the local church there. He spread his wings and began to visit other churches to hold campaigns with other speakers like Howard Carter, C.L. Parker and Donald Gee.

Early in 1932 they moved to Bristol where they carried forward the work with great joy. Then in Nov 1933 the call to Luton came. The church was almost about to close the door due to liabilities. Within two weeks of Harold in the pulpit, large offerings were taken to cover bills and the Word was ministered with real anointing. He led his church forward in a real Pentecost. As he entered 1934 things were stirring. There were monthly meetings of the London District Presbytery of AoG to which he added his own note of scriptural clarity. For a few years he served on the Executive Presbytery of AoG.

At the end of 1934 he published his classic 'The Gifts of the Spirit.' The first time he was challenged concerning this scriptural doctrine was by Howard Carter. Howard would walk and talk with him in earlier years learning all he could. He borrowed Howard Carter's teaching notes and built this book out of them. He had 'hammered' these messages out in study and experience over several years at the Woman's Bible School in Louth as well as in Pastoral ministry in churches. But not only in teaching but also in practical experience he had seen them manifest. The book was soon used in Pentecostal Bible schools in America, Canada and the British Isles as a text book. It is still a classic and is still read widely.

Harold loved to talk about being 100% Pentecostal. He was uncompromising on truths like the New birth, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit as separate from regeneration, healing in the atonement and tongues as the initial evidence of the baptism. In his writings he gave a clarion call for a forward movement in AoG and not a looking back to the 'good old days.' There were now about 300 AoG churches in the land. He

defended the teaching of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the operation of tongues thoroughly. (His booklet 'What is the good of speaking in tongues' was another classic.) He believed the Pentecostal's strongest argument for such was scripture. He never argued from experience or cut people off who disagreed or had doubts, he always dealt with them graciously and patiently. He invited honest enquiry, but always brought the enquirer to the written scripture. Because of his stance many came against him strongly but in spite of what must have been hurtful, he never changed, never got angry and never grew bitter. When he ministered at conventions faith came into people's hearts and they received the baptism and healing.

He wrote clearly and Biblically on issues such as preachers not having unscriptural titles like 'Reverend' - a title reserved for Christ alone. He warned against the wearing of special ministerial garb. He called women to dress modestly. He warned strongest of all about worldly methods of entertainment coming into the church. He had no time for worldly entertainment being brought into the church in order to draw in the unsaved. One of his clearest and most prophetic messages was 'The Naked Splendour of the Cross' which he preached at the annual AoG convention, it sent a shock wave across the movement and is still remembered today.

In September 1938 he resigned from the Luton church, moved to Hampstead and lived on the same road as the Bible School, from where he operated an itinerant ministry and a writing ministry, as well as helping at the School. After the war he departed to the United States where he remained for about five years to minister. During that time his book 'Gifts of the Spirit' was republished twice (1949 and 1953). At this time America was experiencing an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and new healing Evangelists were being raised up anointed of the Holy Spirit and thrust forth touching the masses. Harold sat in a number of these meetings and heard these various men. Harold fully acknowledged that this revival was a true Book of Acts Revival just like the one in which he had been transformed. "Bible days are here again." When Harold returned to Britain in his 60's he spoke as powerfully and clearly as ever.

After 44 years of walking with Christ in true Pentecost, Harold Horton passed away in 1969, and went to meet his King.

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