

# The Purpose of Pentecost

by R. Stanley

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*The purpose of Pentecost is to equip us with power to witness for Christ and to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 61:1, Mark 16:15, John 16:8, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:14, Acts 2:47, Romans 10:15, Galatians 5:22, 2 Timothy 1:6, 1 Peter 2:9

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit", "Evangelism"

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## Description

R. Stanley emphasizes the shift in perception towards the Baptism with the Holy Spirit, noting the decline in opposition and the growing acceptance among leaders. However, he highlights a concerning trend of neglecting the primary purpose of Pentecost, which is to empower believers to be witnesses for Christ. The sermon underscores the importance of Pentecost in equipping Christians to boldly proclaim the message of salvation, emphasizing the need to prioritize evangelism and the sharing of God's love. It challenges believers to move beyond personal experiences to actively engage in missions and charitable acts, reflecting the true spirit of Pentecost.

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## Transcript

Gone are the days when the Baptism with the Holy Spirit was considered a denominational experience. The number of opponents of the Pentecostal truth is on the decline. Recent years have witnessed a number of renowned leaders and theologians of non-Charismatic persuasion changing their position as they tasted the New Wine themselves. The fastest church growth in the world is reported among the Pentecostals and Charismatics. This ought to be so because we are at the end of the last days of the Spirit's outpouring!

However, there is a sad observation demanding serious attention. We have failed to fully understand the "purpose" of Pentecost. The circumferential benefits of the Spirit Baptism are blown up. The central thrust is sinfully neglected. The peripheral blessings have eclipsed the primary. This is true at least in India, among a vast majority of Pentecostals.

The supreme purpose of Pentecost was stated in no uncertain terms by Christ in His last words before Ascension: "You shall receive POWER when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be WITNESSES to Me... to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Let's get it right. To equip us with power to witness for Christ is the supreme purpose of the Spirit's infusion. Any other is secondary.

The Holy Spirit has come to "convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (Jn 16:8). He desires sinners to eschew sin and embrace righteousness. He warns them of the impending judgment. The Church is His mouthpiece. The believers are to articulate His message of invitation to the living waters. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come!... And let him who thirsts come" (Rev 22:17).

The greatest miracle of Pentecost was not the sound from heaven, the mighty wind, the flames or speaking in tongues. These were only a prelude. The climaxing event was the baptism of 3000 people! Pentecost plunders hell to populate Heaven!

When the 120 "Christians" received the Pentecostal power, they reaped 3000 souls. In the city of Chennai alone, there are much more than 120 "Churches" claiming Pentecostal experience. Yet the city has not witnessed even 1000 people baptized on any single day. Where does the problem lie? Have we substituted noise for voice? And rattle for revival? Pentecostal power is for public proclamation of the evangel. "Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said..." (Acts 2:14). Christians, Stand up! Speak up!

Tarrying is only "until" we are endued with power from on High. Then we should troop to all nations to preach repentance and remission of sins in His Name! (Lk 24:47-49). Why did Jesus blow the Holy Spirit on the disciples? To warm them and make them feel good? Never! But that they might go as His agents in the ministry of forgiveness! (Jn 20:22,23).

Pentecost makes cowards courageous. Watch Peter before Pentecost and after. "The boldness of Peter... uneducated and untrained!" (Acts 4:13). Let's stir up the gift of God in us. "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Tim 1:6-8). To witness with "power" against the domains of darkness! To witness with "love" to the hurting humans! To witness with a "sound mind" while succouring the sufferers!

Pentecost is anti-hoarding. It crusades against all selfishness. Its firstfruit is "love" (Gal 5:22). It opens the purses to share with the have-nots. "Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need" (Acts 2:44,45; 4:34,35). That's why even the business managers of the food distribution programme were to be men "full of the Holy Spirit!" (Acts 6:3).

The slogan of the Pentecostal believer should be, I care! He must go to the poor with good tidings. He must visit the brokenhearted with healing balm. He must proclaim liberty to the captives. He must comfort and console all who mourn. He must give them beauty for ashes and oil of joy for mourning. He must clothe them with the garment of praise instead of the spirit of heaviness (Isa 61:1-3).

Pentecost brings renewal in worship (Acts 2:11). And worship must beget witnessing. The Spirit-baptized disciples were "praising God AND having favour with all the people" (v 47). Worshipless witness is passionless. Witnessless worship is purposeless. Witnessing in fact is an act of worship. It is proclaiming God's praises to those in darkness (1 Pet 2:9,10).

Restoration movements are specialising in worship. Wonderful. Sermons on the rebuilding of David's tabernacle abound. Great. But what for is this restoration and rebuilding? "SO THAT the rest of the mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles..." (Acts 15:15-17). Celebration of God's praise should not be isolated from confession of God's grace (Rom 15:9-11). If any of these two dimensions, vertical or horizontal, is missing, we must only say that our Pentecost has not "fully come!"

The semi-believers of the Bible argue that the days of miracles are past. But these men are ignored and God's remnant people are restudying the Scriptures on the gifts of the Spirit. God is restoring to the Church whatever the locusts of liberals and the cankerworms of critics have eaten. Here again we should beware lest we miss the purpose of these gifts. Oftentimes God's primary intent is sacrificed on the altar of man's personal interests.

Jesus gave a partial list of the gifts of the Spirit in Mark 16:15-18. The context is unmistakably evangelism. "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature... And these signs shall follow..." The first healing miracle after Pentecost multiplied the number of disciples to 5000. Men alone so many! (Acts 4:4). The sign gifts are primarily for attesting the gospel preaching (Mk 16:20). "So great a salvation... God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit" (Heb 2:3,4).

Gifts of the Spirit seminars which do not propel the participants to the unreached frontiers, where millions are held under the devil's spell, have completely defeated the purpose. There are tribal areas where every other person is demon-possessed. Rally there to cast out devils. Thousands of primitive villagers are dying of diseases without any medical help. Run there to exercise the gifts of healing. Mission fields present situations which baffle the best of minds. Rush there with your "word of wisdom" and "word of knowledge." What's the use of arms and ammunition unless we fight the enemy with them and free the people?

Dr. R. L. Brandt in his timely book, Gifts for the Marketplace, writes, "The Gifts of the Spirit are not for mere spiritual entertainment, nor for theological speculation... The Pentecostal world has generally held the view that the function of the Spirit's gifts is to be essentially fulfilled within the four walls of the sanctuary... Yet a careful examination of the gifts in the Early Church reveals that they were more commonly used in the marketplace rather than in the meeting place." Raymond Carlson, the General Superintendent of Assemblies of God in the US, in his foreword to this book, overwhelmingly endorses the author's viewpoint.

Note, even speaking in tongues and prophesying, given for self-edification and church-edification, have evangelistic value. Tongues are a sign to "unbelievers." Prophesying convicts the "unbeliever" (1 Cor 14:22,24,25).

One of the superb pictures of Holy Spirit revival is in Ezekiel 37. As the prophet prophesied, the Lord caused His breath to enter the dry bones. There was noise, rattling and all that. But the operation was not complete until they stood on their "feet" as an exceedingly great army! "Beautiful feet" to go shouting the Good Tidings! (Rom 10:15).

Psalms 51 is an unparalleled prayer for personal restoration. David cried, "O God... Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your generous Spirit." What for? "THEN I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You" (vv 11-13). We miss not a single Revival meeting, Renewal seminar and Restoration camp. What's the result? How many are converted thro' our testimony? Let's take stock.

Pentecostal outpouring is accompanied by prophesying, dreams and visions (Acts 2:17,18). What should be the end result of all these manifestations? "And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved" (v 21). That God is first and foremost interested in saving of souls is crystal clear. God's blessings should not stagnate in us. Rather they should flow from us (Jn 7:37,38). "I will bless you..."

and you shall be a blessing" (Gen 12:2).

Visions and dreams are increasingly popular today. An analysis of the visions and dreams in the Book of Acts shows that most of them were related to missionary evangelism. Peter's vision was a call to preach to the Gentiles (Ch 10). One of Paul's visions was to carry the gospel to Macedonia (Ch 16). In another vision God encouraged him to witness boldly amidst hostility (Ch 18). Folks testify of visions of white doves, white angels, white light and so on! Very good. But how about "white" fields ready for harvest? Visionaries must become missionaries.

When will the Pentecostal churches (in India) outdo others in missionary-going and missionary-giving? God cannot endlessly wait and watch millions perish. He so loved the world that He gave away His only Son. But we so love our sons and daughters that we forget the world!

Most of the references to "joy" in the Book of Acts are around evangelism. The disciples rejoiced when they were beaten for their testimony (5:40,41). Philip's evangelistic campaign caused great joy in Samaria (8:8). Barnabas rejoiced when he saw conversions in Antioch (11:22,23). The Gentiles were gladdened when the apostles turned to them with the gospel (13:47,48). The disciples were filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit following persecution and expulsion of Paul and Barnabas (13:50-52). The conversion of Gentiles in Phoenicia and Samaria caused great joy to the believers (15:3). The joy in the Holy Spirit is the joy of the Harvest. Because, He is the Director of missions (13:4).

One of the grossly misapplied sayings of Jesus concerning the Spirit is Mark 13:11. "Do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit." Friends, this has no reference to preaching. Much less to preaching without preparation! Observe the context: "The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. But WHEN they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand..." (vv 10,11).

More and more anti-Christian forces are lifting up their ugly heads in India. Pentecost means persecution, pain, prison, and that kind. Days will reveal who true Pentecostals are! "If you are reproached for the Name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you!" (1 Pet 4:14).

There are still others who are caught up in the web of perfection theories. They keep on polishing their shoes, not to march on to the fields but to walk round and round on mosaic floors and carpets. They are afraid to soil the shoes! What a master deceiver the devil is!

True the fire of the Spirit is to burn all the chaff and purge us thoroughly. He cleans up the vessel inside and out. But what for? Not to keep in the showcase! Rather to be "useful for the Master, prepared for every good work" (2 Tim 2:21). We should not only walk like Jesus, but also work like Him. One is not complete without the other.

Following the first outpouring of the Spirit, the disciples spoke with gladness the works of God (Acts 2:11). After the second outpouring they spoke with boldness the word of God (4:31). This then is the purpose of Pentecost: **TO SPEAK THE WORD OF GOD WITH GLADNESS AND BOLDNESS!**

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