

Holy Spirit and the Crisis of Pentecost - Part 1

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the critical role of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers and the significance of Pentecost as a transformative crisis in Christianity.

Duration: 48:23

Topics: "Pentecost"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that the Bible is primarily about one person, Jesus. The book declares that Jesus lived on earth, worked, and was eventually put to death, but God raised him from the dead. This resurrection is the central theme throughout the Bible. The speaker highlights that the resurrection of Jesus is a demonstration of God's grace, mercy, power, and wisdom, and it holds the center stage of the universe.

Transcript

I'd like to lay a foundation for our meditation in the word of God by pointing you to several passages. Firstly in the letter to the Galatians, the letter to the Galatians chapter 3 at verse 13, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree, that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Let's abbreviate that statement, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Verse 26, For ye are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, chapter 4 at verse 5, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father, so that thou art no longer a bond servant but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. The first letter of John, first letter of John and chapter 3, Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God, and such we are.

For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him, for we shall see him even as he is.

Then the letter to the Romans, chapter 8, verse 16, The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God. 21, Creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. Chapter 9, verse 8, It is not the children of the flesh that are children of God, but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed.

For this is a word of promise, according to this season will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. Sometimes helpful right at the outset to state precisely what it is we are going to think about, talk about, and be occupied with. Not because it is fitting to the season, but I believe because the Lord has so led, we are going to be occupied with the great crisis of Pentecost, and the immense significance of the Holy Spirit.

It would be difficult to overemphasize the importance of the Holy Spirit. We have heard so much, perhaps we know so much, that the mention of this matter may fail to stir us as it ought to on every fresh remembrance. What we need perhaps as much as anything is a sense of the freshness of everything with which we are so familiar.

That particular and peculiar joy that comes with a sense of freshness in old and familiar scenes. I expect many of you know what I mean when I say that we may be very familiar with certain scenes, certain places, certain associations. We may have been familiar with them perhaps all our lives, or for many years.

And then we take someone who has never before seen them. We take a friend, and as we point out this and that, describe this and that, tell the story of this and that, and we see the freshness of appreciation in the friend. How the old thing becomes new to us.

And yes, we begin to see things that we've never seen before as we point them out, and under the inspiration of their enjoyment of something quite new. That is true isn't it? Some of us have been overground so many, many times. And then we have taken someone who has never gone that way.

And in their enjoyment and pleasure, or almost ecstasy, we've been surprised, perhaps a little ashamed, that we never saw it quite like that. Or that it had lost its real attraction for us. And yet, it's something quite old.

Don't you feel, dear friends, that something like that, that we need to recover in relation to the familiar things of the Word of God. Then we put it like this. If you and I were complete strangers to Christianity, and to the Bible, and were really very anxious to know the meaning of Christianity, and the meaning of the Bible, we really were concerned to know.

So that we sat down, and with all diligence, earnestness, and thoughtfulness, began to read the New Testament. Here is a parenthesis I may suggest to you, that's a very useful thing to do. Try and forget that you know it.

And make yourself, imagine that you've never read that before. Come to it as though it were for the first time. You try it, you find there's a real value in that.

Well, supposing that you were really doing that for the first time. What do you think would be the thing that would press itself upon your notice, perhaps more than anything else? If you took up this New Testament, thoughtfully, carefully read, read through the Gospels, found yourself in all that vivid life and movement of the book of the Acts, and then on into the remainder, the letters and the consummation, seeking to get one distinct impression. What do you think that would be? I suggest to you, dear friends, that it would be this.

This, of course, this book is all about one person. That person is called Jesus. That Jesus lived on the earth for a time, taught and walked, and then was put to death.

This book, everywhere, declares that God raised him from the dead. That is the outstanding thing. Everywhere.

God raised him from the dead. But that is not all. This book is just alive because that raising of Jesus from the dead has become a living experience in the people concerned by the power of the Spirit of God.

Don't you agree that that would be the thing that would impress you most? As a stranger to the story, to the book, God raised Jesus from the dead and the Spirit of God has made that a living reality in the life of a whole multitude, and an ever-growing multitude of men and women. The Holy Spirit, for them, was not a theme and a subject, a doctrine and a truth to be discussed and argued about, but an experience. And an experience of Jesus being alive after having died.

When you have really put your hand upon that, and I can see that it makes very little impression upon you, doesn't strike you as anything very wonderful, because you're so familiar with it. But there you are, having put your finger upon that, you have put your finger upon the whole key secret, the wonderful significance of the Holy Spirit. Far more, of course, bound up with that than I have indicated.

Christianity is built upon these two themes. God raised Jesus from the dead, and the Holy Spirit makes that a reality in the lives of believers. Jesus risen, the Holy Spirit given.

Two great foundations of Christianity. But it carries you into a very large realm. You will see that this has its backward aspect.

The Holy Spirit throws full light upon Jesus from his birth to his cross, and explains everything in his life. You will never come into the good and the value of the life of the Lord Jesus from his birth to his cross without the Holy Spirit interpreting, explaining, and making live. You'll only have an earthly story, a bit of history, and biography.

You'll have no life out of those years, and all that was in them, until the Holy Spirit takes up the incarnation, the walk, the teaching, the working, and the dying, and makes them live. We require the Holy Spirit. He is indispensable to the understanding of the coming of the Lord Jesus, and his being here on this earth at all.

Now take one inclusive factor in that. Why did he come? Why did he come? Why was he here? For what did he live, and work, and teach, and die? Only one thing. You might answer it in many ways, but the one inclusive thing was to bring man back into a living, conscious union with God.

That sums up the whole meaning of the life of the Lord Jesus on this earth, and his death. Let me repeat. To bring man into a living and conscious union with God.

Do you recognize that that is a feature, the feature of Christianity which distinguishes it from all other religions in this world? A living, conscious union and fellowship with God. But if that is true, if that is why he came, lived, worked, taught, and died, it was all in vain until the Holy Spirit came, and made it real and live. He came in vain, he lived in vain, he taught in vain, he worked in vain, he died in vain, until the Holy Spirit came.

Therefore, he puts this tremendous importance upon the Holy Spirit. It is expedient for you, if I go not away, the Comforter will not come, even the Spirit of Truth. There is no effecting of the meaning of the life of Christ, apart from the gift and indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

And the very first thing that the Holy Spirit does is to make all that for which Christ came instantly real. The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God. If that does not mean living, conscious relationship with God, what does it mean? The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit.

All the meaning of Christ's coming is made good. Immediately we receive the Holy Spirit, or it begins to be made good. It is taken up and made real.

And what is true of the life of the Lord Jesus, here is true of everything else which we need not pursue. There is no real knowing or living until the Holy Spirit comes and comes in. In our readings this afternoon, we have underlined one word.

I trust that you did it as we were reading. The common factor of all that we were reading, all those passages. There are many more that can be added.

In John's statement for instance, Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God. Now are we the children of God. And you know that it is a basic statement in relation to the coming of the Lord Jesus into this world that through faith in him, believing on him, we should have the right to be called children of God.

The right to be called the children of God. That is why he came. That is why he came.

To constitute this heavenly spiritual family. Children of God. And sons of God.

That is the end in view. Now having just made that statement, dear friends, we are going to allow the advent of the Holy Spirit, the day of Pentecost, to take us a long way back. You know that the Bible is a book of crises.

That is, of turning points which contain different features. Crisis and critic are from the same root. And a critic is someone who takes up a matter at a certain point and indicates the differences.

How differences of view and interpretation are to be seen at that point. And that is a crisis. It is a point reached where things are going to change and there is going to be a difference.

You are going to see a difference from what has been and what is going to be. Now the Bible is a book of crises. There are four major crises in the Bible with a great many minor ones between.

The first great crisis is that of creation. Indeed it was a crisis. It was the intervention of God in relation to purpose.

God's reaction to vanity, to what is void, to what is without purpose and meaning. Serving no real end. Now the earth was without form and void.

God intervened and that was a crisis. And the difference of course is quite plain. The second great crisis is that of redemption.

God intervening to recover. The third crisis was that of Pentecost. The intervention of spiritual fullness as against mere figures and representations and fragments.

Now to bring in the real and the full. For the word full or fullness is always associated with the Holy Spirit. By Pentecost heaven intervention intervened unto spiritual fullness.

I could enlarge upon that no doubt very much comes to you in relation to the Holy Spirit. If I only hint at the number seven connected with the Spirit you know that it signifies spiritual fullness. Great intervention of heavenly fullness on the day of Pentecost.

Then the fourth great crisis of course is that of the coming again of the Lord. The intervention for universal restoration and restitution. Many aspects but that's what it is and for that crisis we wait.

Now note that every one of these major crises the Holy Spirit is very distinctly in view. Spirit of God brooded over the face of the people. Was the agent and the energy of creation.

Everything to do with the crisis of redemption is in the hands of the Holy Spirit. The Redeemer is born of the Spirit. The Redeemer is anointed of the Spirit.

The Redeemer offered himself without spot unto God through the eternal Spirit all the way through the work of redemption. The Holy Spirit was the energy, power, the agent, the custodian. It goes without saying the third great crisis of Pentecost was in the hands of the Holy Spirit.

He took over everything at that point. Even the Lord Jesus very, very strongly stipulated that nothing was to be done, no attempt made even to preach until the Spirit was come. He gave commandment, Luke says, after that by commandment.

What was his commandment? Tarry until he be endued. That was the commandment. No movement, no attempt at anything.

The Holy Spirit came and he took over the whole program. Will it be less in the final crisis of his coming again? The coming again, dear friends, will be but the consummation of the Spirit's work in this age. Then he will have done his work.

He will have brought to birth the sons for manifestation. He will have effected their spiritual growth and perfection. He will, like Abraham's servant, bring the bride and present the bride to the bridegroom.

So the end of the book of the Revelation is the Spirit and the bride. He is in evidence in every connection through the whole outworking of divine powers. But when you have said that, about the four major crises and the many minor ones between, what is it? That is, they are in the foreground all the time.

There are many other intelligences and created beings in the background looking on, sometimes being agents and instruments in the great drama. But in the foreground, or right in the center of the stage, is a creation called man. A unique creation.

A particular creation. The crown of creation. He stands right there as the center of all attention, interest, and activity through all the ages.

He holds heaven's attention. The Bible is the story, from one standpoint, of heaven's interest in man. Heaven's concern over man.

An active interest. A great interest. Time to time we see heaven and heaven's agents breaking in for men.

They are the incidents. It's one great story. Man standing there in the center of the stage and all heaven looking on, all heaven concerned, all heaven active.

Look through your Bible again with that thought in mind. God has created an order called man. There is no other order called man.

Order called man. God is seen from the beginning as the center of heaven concerned with man all the way through. And all heaven is with God in that himself.

Angels and archangels and heavenly councils are all concerned with man. He holds heaven's attention. It's a great, great statement.

That statement of the writer of the letter to the Hebrews. Not unto angels hath he subjected the inhabited earth to come, but one in a southern place hath said, What is man? Thou art mindful of him. Not unto angels, but unto man.

Heaven is concerned. And all hell, all hell is focused upon this particular order of creation. He holds the attention of the whole system of evil.

It is focused upon man. It's a kingdom, but it's a divided kingdom. It is well that we do remember it is focused upon man.

It's a kingdom, but it's a divided kingdom. It is well that we do remember the kingdom of Satan is a divided kingdom. Divided in itself.

Jesus said it. He said it was divided. He didn't put an if about it.

He said it's a kingdom divided against itself. A house divided against itself. It is.

And you can see how in a contradictory way that kingdom of evil works in relation to man. On the one side, it gives itself with such application, determination and subtlety to degrade man. To make man less than he really is.

To lower him. To dishonor him. Evolution can have that effect.

Rubbing man of his dignity in the mind and thought of God. All the terrible history of war. What is it? What is it if it is not the result of a lost sense of the sacredness of human life? The sacredness of humanity.

Gun fodder. Food for the soul. You see, where evil is most prominent and God is most rejected, human life is cheapest.

The liquidation of man as though cheapness to degrade, dishonor and make cheap this great creation with its destiny bound up with it. Is one side of the activity of this divided house. On the other side in its contradiction to make man without God something more than he is.

Man without God something more than is true of him. There you get all that goes to make self-importance. Self-sufficiency.

Arrogance to arrogate to himself rights and abilities and authority. Independence. Pride.

Whole host of things to make man without God more than is true of him. Without God. The destruction of man, dear friends, the destruction of man spiritually, morally and finally physically is the object of that great system of wickedness.

God has a great judgment, the word says, in store for those who destroy. Those who destroy. Which means undervalue his creation.

Now what has all that to do with the Holy Spirit? Well we can never understand Pentecost, the advent of the Holy Spirit, until we recognize that it is by the coming in of the Holy Spirit and only so that God gets the man that he has ever intended to be. The purpose of man's creation was that he should be a child of God. That men should become sons of God.

Paul says, for ordained unto the adoption to be conformed to the image of his son. Pentecost therefore takes us right back to the original thought and purpose of God in the creation of man. And brings that right up to date so that when you and I or any believing man or woman receives the Holy Spirit within, all that God intended in creation starts up, comes into the first phase of its realization.

It can never be until then. And you can see, as we perhaps shall see later as we go on, tremendous change in the kind of person that resulted from the day of Pentecost. You will not tell me that those men and women before Pentecost are those so closely associated with the Lord Jesus in his walk and work, answered to God's thought originally.

But look now. The Holy Spirit has come on and in. They are different creatures.

You might say they are a different order of being. Change is so great in so many respects that they pass from one kingdom to another. Here indeed are the manifestations of Sonship.

Because the Son himself by the Spirit of Sonship has entered in. I repeat, we cannot understand the meaning of Pentecost until we recognize God's intention in making man. And immediately you recognize that.

Then you see the key to the coming of the Holy Spirit. Everything has been pointing toward that in touches and activities of the Holy Spirit through the Old Dispensation. There are some 88 references, direct references to the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.

Do you notice they are partial? They are indicative. They are symbolic. They are representations.

They are pointing on to something. Now do you see something more in that fragment from Galatians? That upon the Gentiles might come the promise to Abraham? The promise to Abraham. What was the promise to Abraham? Universal Sonship in Jesus Christ.

Wasn't it? Paul makes that perfectly clear in the letter to the Galatians. Universal Sonship by faith in Jesus Christ. We are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

It was a universal thing, thy seed, thy seed. It was the stars of heaven, sand, vast, vast. But Paul brings it all down and says the seed is not many seeds, it's one seed, it's Christ.

The promise to Abraham was Sonship to men in Jesus Christ. And now says the Apostle, that is made good by the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise that we might receive the Spirit.

This universe is eventually to be people with sons of God. Creation groaning and travailing is subject to vanity waiting for the manifestation. People with the sons of God.

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God. And such we are. It is not yet manifested what we shall be, but we know that he shall be manifested, we shall be like him.

That's John. And Paul just ups him there and says yes, for ordained to be conformed to his image, the image of his son, we shall be like him. The consummation of the Spirit's work is in sons conformed to the image of God's Son.

That is what he is doing now. Bringing in the sons. Bringing them to birth, born of the Spirit.

Training them as sons. God dealeth with us as with sons. Perfecting sons.

I do wish, dear friends, that this could come to you with due force. That you could really get hold of this. Not just teaching in truth.

It is the most wonderful thing that has ever been revealed in God's universe. This is grace. This is mercy.

This is power. This is wisdom. Everything of God, almighty, all-wise, all-knowing, all-gracious is centered in this.

Bringing many sons to glory. It holds the center of the stage of this universe. Presently, I shall say something more about that from another angle.

But this afternoon, it's just to get in view. The object. The great meaning of Pentecost.

Oh, how we've limited Pentecost. How we have put the emphasis in the wrong place. Yes, with the best of motives.

Seeing the great importance of the Holy Spirit. Rightly seeing the great importance. We have put our emphasis all in one place.

All along certain exclusive lines. All the lines. All the lines and all the emphasis focus here.

The Holy Spirit of God from creation to consummation is occupied with one thing. Making for God a family of sons. Conformed to the image of his son.

That explains everything. And all his dealings with us. The Lord right the object deeply in our hearts.

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