

CHURCH ... on a rising tide
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(ACTS 4:33; 8:8)

Pentecost, coming exactly seven weeks and a day after Passover, perfectly fulfilled the ancient types set in the Jewish feasts. It also fulfilled the mighty promises given by the prophets of successive generations. Pentecost liberated currents of supernatural power, and the early chapters of the Acts reveal a rising tide of spiritual dynamic.

Great Power-Acts 4:33

There is a preaching which bores the listener; which reminds one that the seats are hard, the service too long, and the outside world a most desirable place. There is a preaching which thrills the soul, convicts of sin, and begets increasing determination to go forth to be better men and women. After the coming of God's Spirit, the disciples with great power spoke of the resurrection of their Lord; and immediately a miracle took place within the hearts of those who listened.

Great Grace-Acts 4:33

Preaching which appeals only to the intellect is useless. To be of value, a man's message must reach the hidden depths of human nature. New Testament preaching not only stirred hearts; it tamed passions and loosened purse strings. People who possessed land, sold it in order to place the proceeds in the common treasury. They had obviously become acquainted with John's teaching: "But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutting up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (I John 3:17).

Great Fear-Acts 5: It

The hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira produced an ominous cloud in an otherwise cloudless sky. Their deliberate decision to lie to the Church leaders constituted a crime; and since holiness never fails to reveal and rebuke hypocrisy, the offenders died. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? He that hath clean hands. . . ."

A true revival never needs advertising. "And great fear came upon . . . as many as heard these things."

Great Wonders and Miracles -Acts 6:8

The growing Church soon discovered the need for consecrated leaders. God's business should never be done in a half-hearted, slipshod way. Consecrated men were appointed to control the various organizations and committees, and the first requisite in connection with these leaders was spirituality. "And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people." Happy is that church whose deacons are able to perform miracles! Could these things happen today? Would it still be possible for the sick to be healed by men filled with the Spirit of God? The answer to that question can only be yes. Much of what passes now for divine healing is dissatisfying and fraudulent. The way modern healers man-handle their patients sometimes borders on the disgusting. Nevertheless, if we believe the Scriptures we must agree that anything is possible when the Church moves in the centre of the will of God.

Great Joy-Acts 8:8

Persecution increased the discomfort of the early Christians,

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but it failed to destroy their happiness. " Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them . . . and there was great joy in that city." A miserable Christian broadcasts to the world that something has gone wrong with his Christianity. Shadows on the face mean a cloud on the sun. The first indication that a life has been filled with the power of God is seen when that life overflows with radiant happiness. The charm of the Gospel, the power of the preaching, the unity of the believers, the increasing challenge to unbelievers: these characteristics always deepen devotion and increase the joy of the redeemed.

After years of apathetic indifference, when the cause of God had been at a low ebb, Pentecost turned the tide, and soon lives which had been derelict, stranded, and abandoned, were brought within the harbor of God's love. Our greatest need today is another Pentecost.

My Mother's Clocks

During May, 1958, a cablegram from Wales announced that my mother had been called home to heaven, and for two months my Canadian itinerary had to be interrupted. Ultimately it became necessary to sell my home, and in listing the things for sale, I found my mother's clocks. She had a considerable collection, and I had many frustrating moments making them acceptable to customers. I shall never forget the little clock on which the hands were constantly sticking. Apparently the works were in good order; they " ticked " all right: but just when I was satisfied the clock was in perfect condition, the hands took hold of each other and refused to be separated. Then I found another timepiece which my mother had pushed into the back of a drawer. I wondered why she had discarded the thing, for it was rather attractive; but when I wound it, a remarkable thing happened. Buzzing like an infuriated bee, the works announced they were in great haste and the hands went round at breakneck speed. Let me hasten to confess I am not a watchmaker; I know nothing about the mechanism of clocks, and consequently had no idea what was wrong. Round and round flew the hands, in support of the text that a thousand years are as a day. Then quite suddenly the buzzing ceased and the hands stopped. When I wound the clock again, for the second time it went mad! Finally I put it aside, for it was either motionless or running for its life! I could do nothing with it. Then I came to a small mantel-clock which was unquestionably beautiful. Its polished surface suggested a thing of worth, and I realized it would not be difficult to find a buyer. I wound and placed it in a central position above the fireplace; but when I went into the room a little later, the clock had stopped. I shook it, and it started again. Within the next fifteen minutes I returned again, and was thrilled to see it behaving itself! Yes, I had made a good job of it-but a little later it had stopped once more. Annoyed, I bumped it rather roughly, and the clock responded magnificently. This time it went for thirty minutes, but then stopped. When I placed a little wedge beneath one end of the clock, my annoying little friend appreciated my interest and suitably responded. After twenty minutes it stopped once more. When I put the wedge the other side, my efforts were again rewarded -for a time. Finally I reached the place where the clock responded each time I bumped it, but ultimately I gave it " good measure, pressed down and running over " and it stopped for ever!

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Yes, my dear mother had many clocks; big ones and small ones, tall ones and short ones, fat clocks, alarm clocks, wall clocks. Yet she never had an electric clock. I had one, and it was superb! It never uttered any roaring summons; it never made any fuss. Its hands never went racing ahead; its works never came to a stop. The clock was connected with power, and kept perfect time. It was worth its weight in gold! When I awakened in the night, I looked at my bedside friend, and there shining in the darkness was its radiant face. The gloom only accentuated its illumined dial; and although the clock never uttered a sound, it told me the time as eloquently as any orator could have done.

Those clocks remind me of the Church. There are many nice people who "tick" all right and are a joy to behold. They never cause trouble unless they are asked to do something; then their hands "stick." There are others who are most annoying. They are either very cold or exceedingly hot. They never attend a meeting in six months, or they live on the pastor's doorstep complaining the church is asleep! Their spiritual life is a series of jerks-revivals; but between each one is a period of indifference when they do little for the kingdom of God. There are others who are excellent workers if someone constantly chases them. Without a bump they seldom respond, and of course, the danger is ever present that if they get bumped too hard, they might stop for ever! I shall always thank God that within the one and only church I ever had, were very wonderful people. They did not send out alarms announcing their presence and demanding attention; they never caused trouble. Constantly they were plugged into the power lines of heaven, and living energy flowed into their beings. They were utterly dependable, and quite valuable to their young minister. Their lights shone forth into the darkness, and men saw their good works and gave praise to God. Nearly all the early churchmen were of this type, and that was the reason why they turned the world upside down.

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