

Acts of the Holy Spirit

Sermon #1028
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Study Given by W. D. Frazee—December 16,

Last Friday night shortly after the conclusion of our service I was called to the emergency room of the hospital in town and there I kept watch for some time with one of our dear sisters as the life of her only son ebbed away. Sunday we had his funeral. This boy was only seventeen years old. Another one of those mysteries that we will better understand when we sit down with Jesus in the world to come.

My point is life is very uncertain. None of us know when we are listening for the last time to the message of God. And as I have been meditating on it, friends, I have a new sense of urgency in longing that God shall make this meeting tonight all that it ought to be for it maybe somebody's last meeting. And what would I say to you if I knew that this was the last meeting you would attend? What would I say if I knew that it was the last meeting that I would speak at? Those are meaningful thoughts. Are they not, friends? And very relevant.

In our funeral service we sought to turn the minds of the sorrowing ones to the greater sorrow of God. This to me is the most sublime thought in all the universe. The great sorrow that is bearing down upon the heart of our Lord as He carries the weight of woe for this entire world. Let us never forget that the load that Jesus bore on Calvary did not begin when they nailed Him to the tree. It wasn't over with when He fell asleep or when He rose the resurrection morning.

The sufferings of Jesus for sin began when sin began and they can never end until sin ends. It is written:

"In all their affliction he was afflicted..." Isaiah 63:9.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs..." Isaiah 53:4.

And yet, though He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, it is also true that He was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. The sorrow that God carried is not the frustrating sorrow that so often afflicts the people of this world. Ever before Him He sees the result of it all. He sees the travail of His soul and is satisfied. And tonight I pray that something of that sorrow we shall share with Him, and something of His hope and courage He shall share with us.

There is a book in the Scripture which is unique among all the 66 books. It is the book of the greatest activity, the book of Acts. Those who have printed the Bible have called it the Acts of the Apostles. Someone has well said that it might better be named the Acts of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, however, in these twenty-eight chapters is using human beings. And it is written the record of that blended activity of God and man that you and I may understand something of what God wants to do

through His church today. What He will do before probation closes and Christ comes.

There are three words in this book that I want to direct your attention to. Each one of them begins with P and that will help you to remember the three together. The first is found in Acts the first chapter and the fourteenth verse. I would like you all to turn to this and find the word that begins with "P."

"These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren" Acts 1:14.

What is it? Prayer. And this first chapter of Acts is really the story of a prayer meeting that lasted how long? Ten days. Where was it held? Well, the thirteenth verse says it was held in an upper room in Jerusalem. How did they happen to have this prayer meeting? Jesus had told them to. His parting word to them as He went back to heaven was "I am going to send you a wonderful gift. Tarry in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high."

They took His command very literally. No sooner had they left Mount Olives where they saw He go back to heaven than they went to this upper room. They entered into this season of intercession.

Let's notice the wonderful promise that He gave them.

"For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. ... But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me" Acts 1:5,8.

He gave them a world wide territory in which they were to witness to the power of His name. But before the power must come what? Prayer. So He said, Give yourselves to prayer. Tarry til ye be endued with power from on high.

So they did that. The fourteenth verse says.

"These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren" Acts 1:14.

Now after ten days of this experience something happened. The second chapter tells about that and the third and the fourth and the fifth and so on through. All the other chapters of Acts, twenty-seven in all, are the result of this first chapter. As in the book of Daniel, if Daniel hadn't entered into the experience of the first chapter the rest never would have happened.

So with this book of Acts. If the early church had not entered into the experience of the first chapter, none of the rest would have happened. But because they gave themselves to prayer and supplication, earnest intercession, the second chapter relates the wonderful experience of the outpouring of what? The Spirit. The

Spirit came. And with the Spirit came power. God had said it would come and it did come. And, oh, what mighty power!

You know, Jesus had told the disciples that if they would seek Him, He would send this power and they would be witnesses. And I suppose that more than once during those ten days they looked forward with keen anticipation to what God would do. But I am also sure that what really happened that day was far beyond their fondest expectations. Don't you think so?

Dear friends, there are things that God is waiting to do for you and me tonight that are far beyond anything that we have dreamed of. Far beyond.

"Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" Acts 1:8.

Oh, let us plead for that power! What do you say?

Now what do you think they were doing for those ten days. We have a little hint of it here in the book *Testimonies for Ministers*, page 170.

"For ten days the disciples prayed before the Pentecostal blessing came. It required all that time to bring them to an understanding of what it meant to offer effectual prayer"
Testimonies for Ministers, page 170.

Think of it! And who were these men? Novices? Oh no! They were ordained ministers. They had previous to this some wonderful experiences in evangelism and medical missionary work and working miracles. They had been with the greatest teacher of eternity for over three years. They had heard Him pray. They had said, "Lord, teach us to pray." And they had learned some things. Shall I say, dear friends, they had been through their preparatory schooling in the school of prayer?

But, oh, there were more things that they needed to learn about prayer. And so for ten days they were locked together in a fellowship of intercession and this says it took all that time to bring them to an understanding of what it meant to offer effectual prayer. What does effectual mean? It brings results. It gets something done. It effects something. Not affect. But effect. To accomplish something. Prayer that accomplishes something. Oh, that is what we want. Isn't it? Well how did they learn? Why, they learned, friends, just as men learned to swim. Men learn to swim by swimming. Don't they? And men learn to pray by praying. There is no other way.

They prayed alone. They prayed in little groups. They prayed in larger groups. They kept praying until heaven opened and the fullness of the Spirit was poured out upon the waiting believers. It happened back there. Will it happen again? Oh yes, friends, there is no question about it. We are told so it may be now. We are told that all that Jesus did back there He is waiting to do again today. We are looking forward to that wonderful experience.

Now Jesus had told them that as they prayed the Spirit would come and with the Spirit would come what? Power. That is that second word with P in it. Turn over to the fourth chapter and notice the thirty-first verse. We will notice again the prayer and the power.

“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all” Acts 4:31-33.

So great prayer great power. Is that coming again? Yes, we are told that under the latter rain and the loud cry miracles will be worked, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. We are told that all that the apostles did every church member today is to do. We are to be accompanied by the Holy Spirit in as much greater degree as the wickedness of the world calls for greater power.

So, friends, wonderful things are ahead. The power comes from God, but the prayer must come from who? From us. Do you see that, friends? We can't make the power, but God can't make the prayer. The prayers come from our human lips, the power comes from the sanctuary above. Power is God's answer to our prayer. If we want more power, then more prayer is to come from our lips.

Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray.
This is my heart cry day unto day,
I long to know Thy will and Thy way.
Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray.

Yes, power is coming in answer to prayer. But now I want to look at the third word here in this book of Acts. Let's turn over to the eighth chapter and the first verse and see if you can find a word in there that begins with P. It isn't prayer and it isn't power. What is it? Persecution.

Now the prayer came from who? It came from the church, from human beings. And the power came from who? God. Where did the persecution come from? The Devil and the world. The world stirred up by the prince of darkness.

What kind of persecution does it say? Great persecution. What was that word in front of power? Great power. Great power awakens great persecution. I wonder if that will ever happen again. Will it? Oh yes. I wonder when it will happen. When will the persecution come? When the power comes. And when is the power coming? Do you know, my dear friends, that there are some people who think that we need not expect very much to happen until persecution returns. Wouldn't it be too bad if we were waiting for something to happen in a certain order and God is waiting for it to happen in another order? Wouldn't that be too bad? I wonder if that

could be the reason or at least part of the reason why we have had to wait so long and why God has had to wait.

Which is it? Persecution makes people pray, and then prayer brings the power? Persecution ought to make people pray, shouldn't it? And it does. But what has to start this thing off? Prayer. That is the way it was back there in the early church, that is the way it will be again today.

In the book *Great Controversy*, page 48 is a paragraph with a tremendous challenge. Let me share it with you.

"There is another and more important question that should engage the attention of the churches of today. The apostle Paul declares that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Timothy 3:12. Why is it, then, that persecution seems in a great degree to slumber? The only reason is that the church has conformed to the world's standard and therefore awakens no opposition. The religion which is current in our day is not of the pure and holy character that marked the Christian faith in the days of Christ and His apostles. It is only because of the spirit of compromise with sin, because the great truths of the word of God are so indifferently regarded, because there is so little vital godliness in the church, that Christianity is apparently so popular with the world. Let there be a revival of the faith and power of the early church, and the spirit of persecution will be revived, and the fires of persecution will be rekindled" *Great Controversy*, page 48.

When will persecution come again? When the power comes! When will the power come? When God's people want it enough to plead with God.

I read in *Selected Messages Book One*, pages 121 and 122.

"A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. ... A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer. ... Are we awake to the work that is going on in the heavenly sanctuary, or are we waiting for some compelling power to come upon the church before we shall arouse? Are we hoping to see the whole church revived? That time will never come. There are persons in the church who are not converted, and who will not unite in earnest, prevailing prayer. We must enter upon the work individually. We must pray more, and talk less" *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, pages 121-122.

Again I ask, friends, who is behind persecution? The world and the Devil. Who is behind the power that brings persecution? God. Who is behind the prayer? Who starts that off? You and I do. Of course it has to be by the inspiration of the

Lord, but God has told us long ago that He wanted us to do this. Hasn't He? Yes. So we are not running ahead of Him when we go to prayer. Whether in secret or in little prayer bands of two or three or in larger groups.

Dear friends, this is what the whole universe is waiting for. They are waiting for you and me to enter into the prayer experience. Everything else in a sense is marking time. And yet it is so easy for us to watch what is happening in Vietnam or the United Nations or what the papacy is doing or what something else is doing and suppose that when certain things happen and prophecies are fulfilled, then we may expect this that and the other thing when the truth of the matter is that God has been holding back for many many years that sequence of events in order that you and I might catch up with our part in the sequence.

What is needed? Latter rain power, my friends. But a revival, I read here, can be expected only in answer to what? Prayer. And so we have nothing to wait for, friends, to start this. And I am sure that there are many here tonight who have already begun. The purpose of this study is to encourage us all to enter more and more into this experience.

Remember, after those apostles had been with Jesus three years and a half they still needed special prayer seasons in order to teach them how to pray effectually. And the very fact that we have not yet received the fullness of the latter rain power is evidence that we have not yet learned to pray effectually in the sense that heaven has promised. Am I right?

Now we have noticed that they began with prayer, that led to power, and that in turn led to what? Persecution. But do you know what they did every time they were persecuted? They went back to pray again. Turn to the fourth chapter of Acts. The first part of the chapter shows that because of the mighty miracle when the cripple was healed, the authorities laid hold on Peter and John and put them in jail. The angel came and let them out. But they were summoned and brought before the counsel the next morning and threatened.

So after spending the night in jail, then preaching, being summoned to the counsel, they were finally let go. Now notice what they did.

“And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that...” Acts 4:23-24.

Who heard it? The whole company. They heard the report.

“...when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord” Acts 4:24.

They prayed earnestly.

“And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that

signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus" Acts 4:29-30.

Persecution had brought these people to their knees, and now, in answer to united prayer, what happened? Oh, again the Spirit of God was poured out in mighty power. The place was shaken it says where they were assembled together, and as we read, they were filled with power.

So you see it was a spiral, but it began with prayer in the first chapter. They prayed, mighty power came, that brought persecution, that led them to prayer again, that brought more power, that brought more persecution. You read on and you get over to the twelfth chapter and one of the twelve was killed. Peter was put in prison. They were getting ready to kill him but the church gave itself to what? Prayer. And in answer to prayer God saw fit to send His angel and let Peter out.

Well, it is a wonderful story, friends. And as I said in the beginning it was all put in this book to encourage you and me to enter into a similar experience today. You and I are not going to deliberately bring the persecution. The Devil and the world will take care of that. Only God can bring the power, but you and I can give ourselves to prayer. Let us remember that the purpose of prayer is not to make any change in God, it is to change you? Us. So when we come to prayer it should be with the thought, Lord, what is there in my life, my heart that needs changing to open the way for You to give that larger blessing?

Is it true, friends, that whenever we receive a blessing of power it means there is persecution ahead? Do you believe that?

"All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" 2 Timothy 3:12.

And as I have been meditating on this, friends, I have a ray of light on this and I want to share it with you. It is going to help somebody tonight. I don't suppose any of you here tonight have been put in jail for your faith. I don't know that any of you here tonight have been beaten like the apostles were until the blood runs down the back. But anybody here tonight that has any measure of the power of the Spirit has experienced the reactions of the Devil and the world.

Maybe you didn't recognize it. I am going to give you a little insight. It is in this book *Practical Addresses* a reprint of *Historical Sketches*. This is on page 233. These are some words that Sister White spoke to the descendants of the Waldenses over there in the Vaudois valley of northern Italy. She looked up at those great mountains where many of the saints of God were slain in the middle ages, and she encouraged these modern day descendants of theirs to emulate their example.

"God does not give us the spirit of the martyrs to-day, for we have not come to the point of martyrdom. He is now testing us by smaller trials and crosses" *Historical Sketches*, page 233.

What is the counterpart of the persecutions of the middle ages today for you and me? Smaller trials and crosses.

“And at times when it seems that the billows of temptation will go over our heads, let us remember that the eye of God is watching over us, and let us be willing to endure all the trials that he sees fit to send” *Ibid*.

Now watch, friends, this is going to help somebody more than all the rest I have given tonight. See if that somebody is you. Suppose that we have earnest prayer and that we seek God with all our heart. Suppose God gives us a blessing. If as the result of that in sequence somebody should come in and drag some of us off to jail would that discourage anybody? I doubt it. I think we would say, Well, that is all part of the sequence. We are getting close to home. We are ready for that. And I think that the person that was dragged off to jail would know we were all praying for him. What do you say?

But now suppose that instead of that method of retaliation the Devil simply, not so simply sometimes, brings terrific temptations and tests and trials of other kinds upon us. Is it any less the work of the Devil? And why would the Devil do that? Ah, my friends, he might just think that he would catch us off guard.

My mind goes back to an experience that I shared in some 35 years ago. We were holding meetings in San Francisco. There was a young marine that came in one Friday night and with his comrades sat down way at the back. One of my young people's helpers got hold of him right away after the meeting. The young marine was back Sunday night. He was back again Tuesday night. We were holding meetings three nights a week.

And after the Tuesday night meeting my helper said, “Brother Frazee, this young man would like to talk with you.” So we went in a room, the three of us, and sat down. And he told me his problems. Sometime before he had gotten hold of this book *Great Controversy* in the Naval library in Virginia. He had read this book. So he understood the message. And now, as God would have it, his ship was lying at anchor there in the harbor of the golden gate and he was at our meetings. This was the third meeting he had attended.

But he said, “My problem is that I am the personal orderly to the Captain on the largest ship in the Navy. And if I should tell him that I want to keep the Sabbath and not bear arms, I don't know what would happen.” Well, we went to the book of Acts this very book we are studying tonight and we read what Peter and John said —“We ought to obey God rather than man.” Acts 5:29. We read some promises and had prayer. He went back to the ship having made his decision. And as he lay there in his hammock a bit restless, he got out while all the other men around him were asleep, poured out his heart to God there in that room in the battleship.

Thursday he told the Captain the decision he had made. And the captain sent him to the chaplain on the ship to try to argue him out of this foolish religious idea that he had. But the boy knew his Bible and stood his ground. The chaplain had to send him back to the captain unconvinced. And then the captain sent him to the

doctor. And the doctor, after talking with him, sent him off to the hospital at Mare Island. And he spent his first Sabbath behind bars in that part of the hospital reserved for those who were insane.

My point is this. He told me, my helper and I went up to see him a few days later, he said, "You know, I was all prepared to go to prison. But this kind of got under my skin. I wasn't expecting this."

Now isn't that just like the Devil, friends? And listen, when you pray and God blesses your soul be prepared for the thing you haven't prepared for. Expect the thing you haven't expected. If what you are all nerved up for is to be a martyr you may not have your head taken off like James did, you may not be put in prison like Peter and John, you may be buffeted of Satan as Paul was on more than one occasion.

The Devil has many ways of responding to the power and blessing that God pours into our life. And remember this, God knows what to let the Devil do. And if you are all prepared for one thing, it may be in the providence of God that something unexpected come. And after all, friends, if we can't stand the little trials, what will we do with the great ones?

Do you remember how Jesus urged Peter and warned Peter that he needed to go to what? Prayer. In order to get what? Power. But Peter was so certain that he was all settled and sure that it was hard for him to even keep awake much less pray very earnestly. But Jesus knew. Jesus knew the test was coming and He took Himself to prayer.

Do we know the test is coming? Yes. And as I have pointed out tonight there is a spiral. Prayer brings power, and power brings persecution. And listen, friends, if as you seek the Lord and God blesses your soul some new test comes, it may seem to be a little thing, or it may seem to be some great deluge of sorrow, some awful disappointment, some sad bereavement, or some mighty temptation, remember all of these are the Devils reaction to the blessing that God has given your soul.

But also, every one of those experiences is an expression of confidence on the part of your heavenly commander for He wouldn't let a hoard of the enemy be turned loose on you unless He knew that with the power He had given you, you are more than a match for all those forces of the enemy. Is that right, friends? Oh, let's believe it! Let's let God handle the enemy. We can't handle him. Let's deal with God and let God deal with the Devil. What do you say?

Let's accept the assignment of His providence. If He calls us to be martyrs, let's be martyrs. Let's like Huss go singing to the stake. But something not quite so spectacular will probably be our lot. Somebody may burn the toast or we may be assigned to room with somebody that is less than courteous. We may get a letter that disappoints or ruffles. There is just a lot of things that could happen.

We may be just plain discouraged in our feelings. Any or all of these are merely the efforts of the enemy to neutralize that power, that blessing. But what did the early church do when the opposition and tribulation came? They went right back

to prayer again. And more power came. And then more opposition and persecution. And so it went, friends, until finally, sorry to say, compromise brought a calm. And in the days of Constantine we see the church and the world so immeshed and so tied up one with the other. There is no persecution and there is no power.

Oh, friends, which do you want? Do you want to be on the battlefield? I wrote to somebody just the other day who is thinking about coming here. I said, Don't forget this is a battlefield. If you are coming to take part in this warfare and God is calling you, Come! But come expecting to fight. Come expecting to enter into this warfare.

Did I tell them the truth, friends? Do you know it? Is there a battle on? Is your soul in the battle? Does the Devil try to discourage you? Ah, remember, if you were all his he wouldn't bother you that way. It is because souls are seeking God in prayer, and God is answering with blessing that many of these tests and temptations and trials and tribulations come. Fight the good fight of faith. But where do we fight? On our knees, brethren, as the early church did.

"These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren" Acts 1:14.

Shall we do it?

Now I want to hear from you. As we have studied these things together I know the Holy Spirit has been speaking to your heart. Will you stand and witness, witness as the Holy Spirit witnesses to your heart, will you witness to us what He witnesses to you?

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