

# THE PENTECOST

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In this December, 2010, issue of The Pentecost we will read about one of the early Pentecostal pioneers, William Durham. He was used by God in revivals at, and concurrent with, the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles. Be encouraged by his story of faith. God bless you.

**Shawn Stevens**

If you've been following our magazine you've read about William Seymour and Frank Bartleman. Here is another man who, together with the above mentioned, was involved in that great revival of 1906 called Azusa.

**Ramona Stevens**

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THE MINISTRY OF WILLIAM DURHAM

## THE MINISTRY OF WILLIAM DURHAM

William H. Durham was born in 1873 and lived until 1912. He was originally from Kentucky. He started out as a Baptist, joining the Church in 1891. However, he was not converted to Christ until seven years later, in Minnesota, when he had a revelation of Christ, crucified. Durham entered full-time ministry and became pastor of Chicago's North Avenue Mission in 1901. In 1906, Durham came to the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles and had the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit. He tells of his experience in his own words:

I desire to give my testimony for the glory of God, and in the hope that it will prove a blessing to many that read it.

Nine years ago I was deeply convicted of sin, through the Bible and the Spirit moving upon me, which He continued to do till I truly repented of my sins, and earnestly sought the Lord, finally yielding all to Him, and pleading His mercy. He revealed to my heart Christ dying on the cross, and His voice whispered to me, "Christ died for your sins." Instantly my heart believed, and His peace flooded my soul, and the joy of His salvation was wonderful to me. Later I saw and grasped by faith the truth of sanctification, and the Spirit witnessed to my heart that the work was done, and the Holy Ghost wonderfully wrought in my life.

Five years ago I was called into the ministry, and all these years the Spirit has been with me in a wonderful way. Sometimes I would be overcome by His power. In brief, I honestly believed I was baptized with the Holy Ghost, and testified to it. God had done so much for me, that it was hard for me to believe that there was more for

me, except of course, development as I went on with God. And still there was a longing in my heart for something. I travelled as an evangelist from coast to coast, and preached the Gospel in almost every large city in the United States, speaking to as high as 1,000 people at a time, often seeing from twenty-five to one hundred at the altar in a single service. And many were saved, sanctified, and many healed. But some way all this did not satisfy me, and for a year the heart hunger has increased. Like all holiness people I have met, I kept praying for love, power, etc.

Finally I heard of the work of God in Azusa Street Mission, Los Angeles, and said to my people, That is the work of God. Later I heard some one preach that the speaking in tongues was the Bible evidence that we had received the baptism in the Holy Ghost, and not understanding it I rejected it. But I saw those who were speaking in tongues had something that I did not have, and I finally became a seeker. And the Lord impressed me to go to Los Angeles, and attend the meetings, and seek the baptism in the Holy Ghost. Finally on Feb. 8, I arrived there, and Sunday, Feb. 10, I attended my first all-day meeting. The first man I met on entering the building was Bro. H. L. Blake of Ruthton, Minn., who still believed he had received the baptism with the Holy Ghost in sanctification, and the anointings and fillings that followed; but I told him I was convinced that what I had was not the baptism.

The first thing that impressed me was the love and unity that prevailed in the meeting, and the heavenly sweetness that filled the very air that I breathed. I want to say right here, that I have attended many large holiness camp meetings and conventions, but I never felt the power and glory that I felt in Azusa Street Mission, and when about twenty persons joined in singing the

“Heavenly Chorus,: it was the most ravishing and unearthly music that ever fell on mortal ears. It seemed and still seems to me, I could not sing in that chorus. I know it came direct from heaven. I at once became an earnest seeker, and day after day, I went down before the Lord, and He was true to me. He showed me myself as He saw me. I can never forget the state of utter helplessness to which He reduced me. He even took away the spirit of prayer, my testimony was removed from me, I saw myself apart from Christ as it were, and it made me desperate. I can never forget the faithfulness of Sister Good, and others, in dealing with me. Next to God, I am indebted to them, dear faithful souls, laying down their lives for others; and all the reward they receive so far as I can see, was the plain clothing they wear and food they eat.

After I had been there a little over two weeks, devoting the entire time to seeking my Pentecost, on a Tuesday afternoon, when very much disheartened, suddenly the power of God descended upon me, and I went down under it. I have no language to describe what took place, but it was wonderful. It seemed to me that my body had suddenly become porous, and that a current of electricity was being turned on me from all sides; and for two hours I lay under His mighty power, and yet I knew I was not baptized yet, though I literally felt transparent, and a wonderful glory had come into my soul. Again on Thursday evening following, His power came over me, and I was prostrate on the floor for two hours, and still I knew I was not baptized though I received a great spiritual uplift.

But on Friday evening, March 1, His mighty power came over me, until I jerked and quaked under it for about three hours. It was strange and wonderful and yet glorious. He worked my whole body one section at a

time, first my arms, then my limbs, then my body, then my head, then my face, then my chin, and finally at 1 a.m. Saturday, Mar. 2, after being under the power for three hours, He finished the work on my vocal organs, and spoke through me in unknown tongues. I arose, perfectly conscious outwardly and inwardly that I was fully baptized in the Holy Ghost, and the devil can never tempt me to doubt it. .... Then I had such power on me and in me as I never had before. And last but not least, I had a depth of love and sweetness in my soul that I had never even dreamed of before, and a holy calm possessed me, and a holy joy and peace, that is deep and sweet beyond any thing I ever experienced before even in the sanctified life. And O! such victory as He gives me all the time.

Almost three weeks have passed, and all this is with me, and is deepening all the time. My soul is melted over and over again, and many times I feel as if there were, and I believe there is, a dynamo of power in me; there is nothing selfish about this, but it is fathomless, real, literal, blessed, grand. O that all the world would seek and find this wonderful gift of God! It is something that speaks for itself. I have not had to witness to the saints I have met for when they hear me speaking in tongues and praising the Lord, they just exclaim, “Brother Durham has got his Pentecost.” Glory to God! After receiving the baptism, I remained a few days in the home of Bro. And Sister Osterberg, to whom I am deeply indebted for their great kindness to me, and left for Colorado Springs March 6. Sunday the 10th, preached three times in the G. A. R. Hall to a crowded house, and the power of God was on the people. About fifty came to the altar, and several came through and spoke in tongues. I also spent two nights in Denver, preaching to large audiences, and full altars, and a number came through and spoke in tongues. From there I came to

Des Moines, Iowa, and preached twice in Mrs. Judge Ladd's Mission, which was crowded, and the altar was so full I could not get to all of the seekers to deal with them.

Saturday, March 16, I reached home, and found that the Lord had taken good care of my dear wife and baby during my absence, and Sunday, March 17, we had the largest attendance in the history of the Mission, and again the altar was so full, that it was hard to deal with the people. And so the work goes on, the Spirit falls like rain wherever I preach His word, and it seems there is no effort on my part. I will close my testimony by saying to all who read it: This work is of God, there is no doubt of that. And I would advise all my friends to seek the baptism in the Holy Ghost, till they get the evidence in tongues, for it always follows; I know of no exception. Now just a word concerning Bro. Seymour, who is the leader of the movement under God: He is the meekest man I ever met. He walks and talks with God. His power is in his weakness. He seems to maintain a helpless dependence on God and is as simple-hearted as a little child, and at the same time is so filled with God that you feel the love and power every time you get near him.- W.H.Durham.<sup>1</sup>

William Seymour prophesied that wherever Durham preached the Holy Spirit would fall on people. Durham returned to Chicago and his ministry was full of revival. Durham's meetings were packed and would extend deep into the night, even sometimes into early morning. One report says that a thick haze could even be seen over the Mission. People were being ministered to by the Lord in deep and profound ways. Thousands came to the Chicago Mission.

In February, 1911, Durham came back to Los Angeles, first to the Upper Room Mission and then to Azusa Street Mission. Here, this time with a message. He began preaching on the finished work of Christ and on sanctification. Durham's teaching on sanctification clashed with Seymour's. Seymour taught that sanctification was a distinct second work of God's Spirit, following conversion, and preceding the baptism of the Spirit. Durham taught that sanctification occurred at conversion and was not a second work.

This teaching resulted in a huge rift in Pentecostalism. Seymour locked Durham out of Azusa and Charles Fox Parham denounced him also. Frank Bartleman tells of Durham's ministry in these words:

In a few days Brother Durham rented a large building at the corner of Seventh and Los Angeles streets. A thousand people attended the meetings here on Sundays. We had an ordinary congregation of four hundred week nights. Here the 'cloud' rested. God's glory filled the place. 'Azusa' became deserted. The Lord was with Brother Durham in great power. God sets His seal especially on present truth to be established. He preached a gospel of salvation by faith. He was used mightily to draw anew a clear line of demarcation between salvation by works and faith, between law and grace. This had become very much needed, even among the Pentecostal people.<sup>2</sup>

Bartleman comments further:

The opposition against Brother Durham was

tremendous and he was finally tempted to strike back. This I felt was not the Spirit of Christ, though he had tremendous provocation. Possibly few have been able to stand successfully such a test. I left the platform finally, not willing to stand for a spirit of retaliation. I felt I must keep clear of carnal strife and controversy. But the Lord had wonderfully used dear Brother Durham. He was sent of God to Los Angeles.<sup>3</sup>

Durham continued his work for a short time, up until his death in 1912. Very many were drawn to Durham's message. Although Durham did not live long after his second visit to Azusa Street, he left behind his theology. It was not long before an organization formed, with Durham's teaching playing a large part. That organization is the Assemblies of God and today is the largest Pentecostal body in the world.

James R. Goff, Jr. tells of these developments in these words:

In 1910, William H. Durham, pastor of the North Avenue Mission in Chicago, began making waves throughout Pentecostal circles when he denounced these views. 'I began to write against the doctrine that it takes two works of grace to save and cleanse a man,' he later wrote. 'I denied and still deny that God does not deal with the nature of sin at conversion. I deny that a man who is converted or born again is outwardly washed and cleansed but that his heart is left unclean with enmity against God in it.' This wouldn't be salvation, he argued, because salvation 'means that all the old man, or old nature, which was sinful and depraved

and which was the very thing in us that was condemned, is crucified with Christ.' He dubbed his position the 'finished work at Calvary' because he believed the work of Christ on the cross was sufficient for both salvation and sanctification. Finished-work Pentecostals slowly also came to stress a gradual process of sanctification, not an instantaneous one, in which the sanctifying work of Christ was 'appropriated' over one's life.<sup>4</sup>

After Durham returned from Los Angeles he became ill and died of pneumonia in the summer of 1912.

God led Durham to saving faith in Minnesota and then set him apart for ministry. Durham eagerly and zealously went about that work. Durham's ministry was made more effectual after his experience of Spirit baptism. Many have followed his lead.

## Shawn Stevens

### ENDNOTES:

- 1 W. H. Durham, "A Chicago Evangelist's Pentecost" in *The Apostolic Faith*, Vol. 1, No. 6 (Los Angeles: The Apostolic Faith Mission, February-March, 1907), 4.
- 2 Frank Bartleman, *How Pentecost Came To Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Frank Bartleman, 1925), 146.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 150.
- 4 James R. Goff, Jr., "Sanctification Scuffles" in *Christian History*, Issue 58, Vol. XVII, No. 2., 18-19.

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- Bartleman, Frank. *How Pentecost Came To Los Angeles*. Los Angeles: Frank Bartleman, 1925.
- Durham, William H. "A Chicago Evangelist's Pentecost" *The Apostolic Faith*, Vol. 1, No. 6. February - March 1907. Los Angeles: The Apostolic Faith Mission.
- Goff, James R. Jr. "Sanctification Scuffles" in *Christian History*, Issue 58, Vol. XVII, No. 2., 18-19.
- The New International Dictionary Of Pentecostal And Charismatic Movements. Revised and Expanded Edition. Burgess, Stanley M. Editor and Eduard M. Van Der Maas, Assoc. Ed. Grand Rapids : Zondervan.

## A Prayer for Revival

Lord, forgive us for seeking out some middle ground between freedom of the Spirit and formalism of religion. We have chased after the world and become world-weary.

Oh, for a glimpse of heaven to change our perspective.

Now we kneel before you, still.

Forgive us for our self sufficiency.

Forgive us for our independence.

Forgive us for our pride.

Lord, you have been here all along, waiting for us like the father who waited and watched for his prodigal son.

Your hands have been stretching out to us.

Now we stir ourselves to take hold of them.

We want our gatherings to be times that are truly turned over to You.

We long to see Your ministry among us sweep on in power, unguided by human hands.

Lord, may the tide of revival rise in our land and in our churches.

We cry out for a revelation of You to our hearts. May everything of religion melt like wax before You and be swept away.

Give us the gift of faith to believe You for awesome and mighty things. We need You in a desperate way.

Do not delay Your touch, for we need it more than words can say.

We fall on our faces and express to You our need.

We need Your grace above all other things.

Will You come to us and restore our hearts?

We lay our lives on Your altar, keeping back nothing.

Will You cause Your fire to fall upon it?

We need a downpouring of the Holy Spirit on our dry and weary hearts.

Only You can supply this deluge. We cry out to You in earnest. Send the flood!

Surely, the precipitation lingers but a little. Surely, it is not far off.

We do not deserve the moving of Your Spirit.

We beat our breasts to cry "unworthy."

However, You are a God of grace and mercy Who loves us.

So we cry out for Your touch.

May Your touch thoroughly change us.

Brood over our believing prayer, may it touch Your heart and receive an answer.

Oh Lord, search us to the very bottom. Cause the dross to come up and out.  
We want Your heavenly chorus to sound out of us and be heard.  
Sing through us Your song, Oh Lord.  
We need the latter rain of Your Word to soak us.  
May we come under Your residue of oil?

Forgive us for worshipping tradition.  
Let us break from it, wherever it has hardened us or misrepresented You.

Lord Jesus, let Your holy blood wash our slate clean again.  
Bring us to pieces and then build us anew after Your plan.  
We need a complete overhaul.  
Keep us from grieving Your Spirit. Set things right within us.  
Lord, it is an awful thing for us to hold on to our lives when You are calling for them.  
We surrender all to You.  
Be honored by our lives.  
Remove all religious ambition from our hearts, and give us childlike hearts of pure service to You.  
Stir up pure zeal within us and show us how to channel that into pure kingdom work.  
Remove from us all the unhealthy mixture of darkness. Remove everything that would offend, hinder or entangle.

Give to us a hunger for everything holy that burns within Your passionate heart.  
Jesus, come in and overturn the tables and start a new work within us.  
Be the center.  
Be our declaration to the church.  
Be our declaration even to the unseen realm, all of which is under Your feet.  
Let us be like the humble manager that simply backgrounds You and Your glory, all the time pointing to You.  
Bring a permanent stop to all of our backsliding and retrograding compromises.  
En vigor us in the faith. Awaken us from our slumber. By Your grace we choose a better way.  
We are the expectant children, looking up to You.  
Let all of the old forms be deared away and let Your kingdom roll forward in revival.

Bring to Your people the unity that we have failed to achieve on our own.  
Unite us in truth and love.  
We need to be caught up to Your great throne and to see Your face.  
We need for Your anointing to break our yokes.

Shawn Stevens