

THE PENTECOST

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Zion TAPE MINISTRIES

Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice!

Have mercy also upon me, and answer me

When You said, "Seek My face,"

My heart said to You, "Your face, LORD, I will seek."

Psalm 27:7-8

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THE PENTECOST

Hello, and welcome to another issue of *The Pentecost*. We will be covering much territory as we travel from 15th century Italy to 21st century Nigeria. Humility, and heart preparation for the preaching of repentance and revival, will be our focus.

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OH, TO HAVE A HUMBLE SPIRIT

It has been said that the door to God's kingdom is a low door. No one prances through on horseback. All who would enter it must bend down to the ground. Isn't it true that we often don't recognize our need for God until we have reached the end of our rope? Once we have come to this end, and this recognition, we see the door, low, but open. In following Jesus we should not expect to arrive at personal glory, but we will arrive at a place of simple childlikeness. I don't mean a place of childishness. I do mean a place of humbleness and genuineness that sometimes characterizes young children who have not yet been trained to wear all of this world's masks. Jesus said, "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 14:11). Jesus here talks about humility within the context of God's kingdom. There are other places where humility is spoken of in the context of salvation, showing us that a person must humble himself to even enter this kingdom. Being humble does not end with gaining salvation, but continues as an important life-principle within God's kingdom.

As with all spiritual qualities and disciplines, Jesus is our most valuable model. Consider for a moment the experience of Jesus after the Spirit led Him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. At one point, the devil took Jesus up to the pinnacle of the temple and said, "... If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: He shall give His angels charge over you, and, in their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot

against a stone." (Matthew 4:6). What was the temptation in this? The devil was trying to arouse pride in Jesus, that Jesus could be a superman.¹ He wanted Jesus to fly through the air and land in front of everyone's astonished gaze. Jesus did not succumb to this. Instead, He rebuked the devil. The humble nature of Jesus was entirely the opposite of the superman attitude. He said on another occasion, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Matthew 11:29). Jesus was, and is, the Son of God, the Creator of everything, the worker of miracles, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Yet, He made Himself of no reputation, took on the form of a bondservant, was born in a manger, identified with common men and women and suffered a cruel death on a cross. There was great humility in this. This was the price for your eternal soul, and for mine. Oh, to be like Jesus, holy and lowly. There is grace that God gives to these "... he giveth grace unto the lowly" (Proverbs 3:34 KJV). As we follow Jesus, there will be many humblings along the way. You may be a teacher of others. Are you also a learner? You may be someone whom people go to for advice. The Lord may put you in a situation where you need to take advice, perhaps even from someone whom you have difficulty in loving or respecting. Are you willing to lay down your own good ideas and plans for God's best plans? This is all a part of walking humbly with God. "He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8). Walking humbly with God is the only way to walk with God.

¹ Russell Semel, *The Beatitude: Godly Plein For Better* (Dartmouth de Argois, Columbia: Ramsey Press, 1992), 142.

THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF SAVONAROLA

He has been called "the most imposing preacher of the Middle Ages and one of the most note-worthy preachers of righteousness since St. Paul."¹ Girolamo Savonarola was born on September 21, 1452, in Ferrara, Italy. He began studying medicine but left that field for the ministry. He was struck very deeply by the corrupt conditions of society and became a Dominican monk. He said:

I could not endure any longer the wickedness of the blinded peoples of Italy.

Virtue I saw despised everywhere and vices exalted and held in honor. With

great warmth of heart, I made daily a short prayer to God that He might release

me from this vale of tears. 'Make known to me the way,' I cried, 'the way in

which I should walk for I lift up my soul unto Thee,' and God in His infinite

*mercy showed me the way, unworthy as I am of such distinguishing grace.'*²

In 1481, he moved to Florence and began ministering. He was not well received and he continued on to other neighboring areas. In 1489, he was invited back to Florence and the population took notice of his powerful preaching. Florentines flocked to hear him and he began writing as well as preaching. His discourses were a mixture of preaching against sin and preaching the tender love of God. It has been estimated that crowds as large as 12,000 came to hear him. In his preaching, he strongly rebuked the clergy of his day for their greed, their attention to classical literature over the word of God and their devotion to outer ceremonies

while neglecting the inner life of the soul. He called to account the Vatican in Rome with these words:

*Go to Rome and see! In the mansions of the great prelates there is no concern save for poetry and the oratorical art. Go thither and see! Thou shalt find them all with the books of the humanities in their hands and telling one another that they can guide men's souls by means of Virgil, Horace and Cicero.... The prelates of former days had fewer gold miters and chalices and what few they possessed were broken up and given to relieve the needs of the poor. But our prelates, for the sake of obtaining chalices, will rob the poor of their sole means of support. Dost thou not know what I would tell thee! What dost thou, O Lord! Arise, and come to deliver thy Church from the hands of devils, from the hands of tyrants, from the hands of iniquitous prelates.'*³

As well as powerful preaching, another aspect of Savonarola's discourses which distinguished him was his prophetic element. For example, before his last Advent sermon, in 1492, he beheld above him in the sky a hand grasping a sword. Inscribed on the sword was: "Behold the sword of the Lord will descend suddenly and quickly upon the earth."⁴ Following this, he saw the sword turn towards the earth, the sky darken and swords, arrows and flames raining downwards. The heavens shook with thunder and the world suffered famine and death. The vision concluded with a command to Savonarola to make these things known.

¹ Girolamo Savonarola, quoted in Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 8 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1984), 615.

² Girolamo Savonarola, *Villari*, I, quoted in Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 8 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1984), 615.

³ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 8, (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1984), 615.

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Savonarola burned with holy passion. It has been said that his preaching was "impulsive, pictorial, eruptive" and "startling." He believed in and preached revival and, on one occasion, said, "O priests and friars, ye, whose evil example has entombed this people in the sepulcher of ceremony, I tell ye this sepulcher shall be burst asunder, for Christ will revive His church in His Spirit." On another occasion he said, "I preach the regeneration of the church, taking the Scriptures as my sole guide."¹

In 1494, King Charles VIII of France marched into Italy with an army of approximately thirty thousand men. As he swept through, Florence was liberated from the rule of Piero de' Medici. A new government was set up under the control of Savonarola. Although initially unchallenged, Savonarola had made a powerful enemy. Pope Alexander VI excommunicated him and forbade him to preach openly or in private. Savonarola courageously continued preaching with boldness. He declared: "The pope may command me to do something that contravenes the law of Christian love or the Gospel. But, if he did so command, I would say to him, 'thou art no shepherd.'²" On February 28, 1496, he declared:

Who are the fat kine of Bashan on the mountains of Samaria? I say they are the courtesans of Italy and Rome. Or, are there none? A thousand are too few for Rome. 10,000, 12,000, 14,000 are too few for Rome. Prepare thyself, O Rome, for great will be thy punishments.³

Under Savonarola's leadership, many reforms came to Florence. In 1496, the yearly carnival, which previously had been known for its revelries, was converted into a semi-religious festival. Boy's brigades were established and, in groups, they marched throughout the city singing hymns, some which were composed by Savonarola. The brigades also received collections for the poor.

Pope Alexander was determined to bring down Savonarola. He demanded that Savonarola be imprisoned or sent to Rome. Those in government with Savonarola eventually turned on him and told him to refrain from preaching. Savonarola was later ordered into exile, however, he remained in Florence. A hostile mob stormed St. Mark's convent and Savonarola was imprisoned. Savonarola was then subjected to horrible torture. He was sentenced to death and hung in the public square on May 23, 1498. Before his hanging, a prelate declared, "I separate thee from the Church militant and the Church triumphant." To this Savonarola responded, "Not from the Church triumphant, that is not thine to do."⁴

Many in Florence mourned the death of Savonarola. They respected him for his moral conviction, his eloquence, for his love of Florence and for his whole-hearted devotion to righteousness.

Shawn Stevens

References:

¹ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 8 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1996).

² Leonard Koenig, *Savonarola and His Bible* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1986).

³ De Lanza, *Italy: Renaissance Europe: Age of Recovery and Reconciliation* (Lexington, D.C.: Heath & Co., 1992).

⁴ Leonard Koenig, *Savonarola and His Bible* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1986), 201.

⁵ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 8, (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1996), 697.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 698.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 698.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 711-3.

ONE LORD OF THE HARVEST

*One LORD of the harvest,
One Pearl of Great Price,
One Gospel with power
To save a wandering life.*

*One Lamb Who is worthy,
And one Sacrifice,
One Atonement sufficient
To buy eternal life.*

*One Door to the sheepfold,
One Way that is right,
One Voice that we follow
As we're walking through this life.*

*This Stone, it was rejected
By men He came to save,
But here it forms the corner
Of this house that God has made.*

Shawn Stevens

I would like to introduce to you a friend of mine from the other side of the world. Albert Ikehife is from Nigeria. He loves the Lord and he has this teaching for us.

Dear Friends, Do you know that knowing God's will is not enough for us as Christians. Luke 1:34, says, "Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?"

Contrast Mary's question and Gabriel's response with the question that Zacharias asked Gabriel and the response that he received (Luke 1:18-20). You will find the questions are similar but the responses are totally different.

Both Mary and Zacharias asked how these miracles would occur but it is evident that Mary was asking "how" in faith while Zacharias was asking "how" in unbelief. It is a clear Bible teaching that unbelief doesn't please God (Heb. 11:6), but the Lord doesn't mind us questioning Him for the purpose of instruction so we can cooperate with His will in our lives.

Abram knew that it was God's will for him to have a son but Abram and Sarai came up with their own plan which caused them and the world much grief (Gen. 16:1-6). Abram would have avoided many problems if he had asked the Lord how He was going to accomplish this miraculous event.

If Mary had not questioned this angel, she might have reasoned that Jesus would be born through the natural union of her and Joseph. This would have been a grave mistake. It would have disqualified her from being used.

It's not enough just to know God's will. We need to continue to seek the Lord until we know God's plan for accomplishing that will.

God bless you as you take to this path.

Albert Ikehife



BOOKS

In this issue, I would like to feature two of my books. You may read these books online. You may also order a hard copy from this ministry, free of charge for as long as the Lord enables.



JESUS CHRIST AND THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

Historians love ancient documents. They are excited when they come across ones that date back 100 years. They are elated when they have access to ones that are 200 or 300 years old. However, when documents that are over twenty centuries old are found, these are in a class by themselves. Explore with me the mystery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. How old are they? How do we determine their age? Of how much significance are they? What do they say about Jesus Christ?

JOHN NEWTON, WILLIAM WILBERFORCE AND THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

From the storm-struck slave ship of John Newton to the halls of British parliament, the story of the abolition of slavery is one that everyone should hear. May we never forget those who suffered under slavery. May we always abhor the injustice that they experienced. May we celebrate their deliverance and the courageous determination of Christian abolitionists who fought for and won the battle for abolition.

