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The Pentecostal Mind

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Abstract

What causes Pentecostals to do the things they do? What motivates them? Why do they minister in the ways that they do? These are all good questions that deserve answers. Fortunately, the Bible supplies us with some insight into these matters. One of the key factors that impacts Pentecostal practice is the Pentecostal mindset. This article will focus primarily on one biblical passage that will help the reader in understanding the Pentecostal mind. We will be looking at the experience of the first-century Christians in the city of Jerusalem in Acts 4:23-31..

Keywords: Pentecostal, Pentecostal Mind, Mind, Mindset

Abstrak

Apa yang menyebabkan orang-orang Pentakosta melakukan hal-hal yang mereka lakukan? Apa yang memotivasi mereka? Mengapa mereka melayani dengan cara yang mereka lakukan? Ini semua adalah pertanyaan bagus yang pantas mendapatkan jawaban. Untungnya, Alkitab memberi kita beberapa wawasan tentang hal-hal ini. Salah satu faktor kunci yang mempengaruhi praktik Pentakosta adalah pola pikir Pentakosta. Artikel ini akan berfokus terutama pada satu bagian Alkitab yang akan membantu pembaca dalam memahami pikiran Pentakosta. Kita akan melihat pengalaman orang Kristen abad pertama di kota Yerusalem dalam Kisah Para Rasul 4:23-31.

Kata kunci: Pentakosta, Pola Pikir Pentakosta, Pikiran, Pola Pikir

INTRODUCTION

As we begin to consider the subject of the Pentecostal mind, let us start by defining our terms. Most readers will likely already know that the word *Pentecostal* is not found in the Bible. However, this term has its basis in a word that is found in Scripture; that is the word

Pentecost. Pentecost means “fifty days”;¹ it refers to “a Jewish harvest festival.”² This festival was also called “the Feast of Weeks” and “the Feast of Harvest.”³ The Jewish people were supposed to observe this feast; there are references to it in the Old Testament.

Now that we have briefly touched on some of the Old Testament background, let us move on to the main focus of this paper: the implications of what took place on the feast of Pentecost that is recorded in Acts 2. On that day, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the early believers (Acts 2:4). This event ushered in a new experience for the followers of Jesus; they were empowered to be witnesses for Christ (Acts 1:8), and they also spoke in tongues (Acts 2:4). The boldness to witness was evident in the ministry of Peter on that day (Acts 2:14-41) and subsequently, not only in his ministry, but in the ministries of other believers as well (Acts 4:8-12, 31, 33; 6:8-7:60; 1 Cor. 2:1-5; 1 Thess. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:12). Speaking in tongues also continued after the day of Pentecost. We see it specifically mentioned in Acts 10:46 and Acts 19:6. There is also reason to believe that the Samaritans spoke in tongues when they were filled with the Spirit, though tongues are not specifically mentioned. Carl Brumback, drawing heavily from P. C. Nelson’s *The Life and Letters of St. Paul*, cites a number of scholars who believe that tongues accompanied the Samaritans’ reception of the Spirit.⁴ He further points out that, though tongues are not specifically mentioned in Acts 9 when Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit, we know he did speak in tongues (1 Cor. 14:18) and that it would make sense that it first happened when he was filled with the Spirit in Acts 9.⁵ Brumback calls these occurrences of tongues a part of the “pattern” of Pentecost.⁶

¹ David S. Dockery et al., eds., *Holman Bible Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1992), 636.

² Ajith Fernando, *The NIV Application Commentary: Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 86.

³ John F. Walvoord and Roy Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament* (Victor Books, 1987), 159.

⁴ Carl Brumback, *What Meaneth This? A Pentecostal Answer to a Pentecostal Question* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1947), 208-214.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 216-217.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 198-203.

Many Christians who have had the experience that the believers in Acts 2 had are today called Pentecostals. The online version of *Introducing Spirit-Empowered Christianity* says that in 2020 there were about 124 million Pentecostals in the world.⁷ They are part of the total Spirit-empowered movement which is estimated to be 644 million.⁸ In the United States, many Pentecostals are in Pentecostal denominations like the Assemblies of God, Church of God in Christ, Church of God (Cleveland, TN), and the International Fellowship of Christian Assemblies. In Indonesia, Pentecostals will be found in Pentecostal denominations like the *Gereja Pentekosta di Indonesia* (GPDI), which is the oldest one in the country.⁹ In this paper, my concern is not with the Pentecostal groups but with the Pentecostal experience.

LITERATURE & DISCUSSION

The word *mind* is found in the Bible. The mind is internal, a mental capacity, where thinking takes place. In this paper, I will use the word *mind* to describe a particular way of thinking or viewing things: a mindset. Another way this could be expressed is to call it a worldview. Writing about the subject of spiritual warfare, Dr. Sam Storms has said that “the biblical worldview . . . is God’s worldview.”¹⁰ This is true, and this is the framework that Pentecostals seek to operate in: we are people of the Bible. God’s truth shapes how we think and act. Pentecostal writer Lora Angeline Embudo Timenia has written, “I speak in tongues and pray for divine healing. I preach the gospel believing that signs and wonders will follow.

⁷ Todd Johnson and Gina Zurlo, *Introducing Spirit-Empowered Christianity: the Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Movement in the 21st Century* (Tulsa, OK: Oral Roberts University, forthcoming), accessed July 27, 2021, <https://introsec.pressbooks.com/front-matter/introduction/>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Gani Wiyono, “Pentecostalism in Indonesia,” in *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, edited by Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang, rev. ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 248-265, 254.

¹⁰ Sam Storms, *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: A Comprehensive Guide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reflective, 2021), xvii.

I am very much a Pentecostal woman.”¹¹ This is a very accurate description of the Pentecostal mind and sets the stage for what I will present below. For Pentecostals, biblical faith is not just history, it is not just something to read about, it is a reality to be experienced. We expect that the things the people in the Bible experienced can, and should, be experienced by us today. This is not just wishful thinking; we have good reasons for this belief. One of the primary reasons is that God has not changed (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8). I will mention other reasons later in the article.

The Pentecostal mind refers to the viewpoints held by those who have had the same experience as the early Christians did in Acts 2. The empowering of the Spirit does make a difference! The principles I will highlight below can be found in a number of places in Scripture. I know that speaking in general terms can be dangerous and that not everyone who has had a Pentecostal experience will necessarily agree with me on every point. Nevertheless, I think that there should be significant agreement regarding most of what I have written. The Pentecostal mind, or worldview, impacts our perception of reality *and* our practice. Below I will highlight five characteristics of the Pentecostal mind: we are people of a particular perspective, who persist in persecution, practice prayer, experience power, and know our purpose as a people. As we look at these characteristics, we will use Acts 4:23-31 as the biblical basis for our consideration of them. The events of Acts 4 took place *after* Pentecost. As twenty-first century believers, we too are part of the church after Pentecost. Even though we are removed from the early believers, both in time and in location, we are still in the time period known as the “last days,” a time which extends from the first century until “the day of judgment at the end of the world.”¹² During this time period, God said He would pour out His Spirit (Acts 2:16-18).

¹¹ Lora Angeline Embudo Timenia, *Third Wave Pentecostalism in the Philippines: Understanding Toronto Blessing Revivalism's Signs and Wonders Theology in the Philippines* (Baguio City, Philippines: Asia Pacific Theological Seminary Press, 2020), vii.

¹² Fernando, 101-102.

Particular Perspective

The particular perspective that I am referring to concerns Scripture. The early believers recognized Scripture as the Word of God. It originated with God; this is something that Scripture itself affirms (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). In Acts 4:25, the first-century believers acknowledged its divine origin when they said that *God spoke* through His servant David. The remainder of verse 25 and all of verse 26 are a citation from Psalm 2. This Old Testament passage informed their life of faith, it served as a basis for their prayer. This is as it should be. Scripture needs to occupy the minds and hearts of God's people. In fact, the Bible tells us the benefits of meditating or thinking about it (Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:2). Praying Scripture is one way in which people can incorporate its truth into their lives. Some authors have written about praying Scripture; Kenneth Boa is one of them.¹³ The text in Acts 4 is a biblical example of doing that.

Though Scripture contains much history, it is not just history. The text from Psalm 2 was meaningful to the believers in Acts 4. The rebellion or “war” against God that the Psalmist wrote about in the Old Testament did not end immediately after Psalm 2 was written, nor did it end with the hostilities of Herod and Pilate. It continued in the days of the first-century church as the Jewish leaders of the apostles' day persecuted the Lord's people, the early Christians. Those of us who have a Pentecostal mind today, like our counterparts in the book of Acts, also accept the divine origin and authority of Scripture. The doctrinal statement of the Pentecostal denomination that I am a part of says this about the Bible.

We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the verbally and plenary inspired Word of God. We accept the original autographs as God-breathed, inerrant, infallible and complete, and therefore hold the sixty-six books of the Bible as the complete and divine revelation of God to man and the final authority

¹³ Kenneth D. Boa, *Face to Face: Praying the Scriptures for Spiritual Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997).

for faith and life. The Scriptures are to be interpreted according to their normal grammatical-historical meaning (II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:20-21; Matthew 4:4).¹⁴

The Assemblies of God Statement of Fundamental Truths is very similar: “The Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are verbally inspired of God and are the revelation of God to man, the infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct (2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Thessalonians. 2;13; 2 Peter 1:21).”¹⁵

As Pentecostals, we accept the authority of Scripture; this is as it should be. In Matthew 4:4 Jesus said, “It is written: Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (NIV). Paul tells us that it has multiple benefits (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Bible informs our ethics, expectations, and experiences. Through its teachings we know what is important as well as what is true and real.

Persistent in Persecution

Persecution is an unpleasant subject. It is also something that we don’t want to experience; it goes against our natural human desire for comfort. However, persecution is part of the Christian experience, especially for those who engage in ministry. Since this is so, we need to come to terms with it. The early Pentecostals in Acts did, and we need to as well. Jesus warned His followers that they would suffer persecution (Matt. 5:11; John 15:18-20).

It is clear from verses that appear prior to our text in Acts 4 that the apostles Peter and John experienced persecution. They were jailed (Acts 4:3) and threatened (Acts 4:18-21). That is why the church was praying in Acts 4:24-30. Prior to Pentecost they had probably also experienced some resistance when Jesus sent them out on a ministry trip in Matthew 10. In Matthew 10:14, He told the apostles what to do if people did not welcome

¹⁴ International Fellowship of Christian Assemblies, “Articles of Faith,” para. 1, accessed July 27, 2021, <http://ifcaministry.org/about-us>.

¹⁵ Assemblies of God, “16 Fundamental Truths,” accessed July 27, 2021, <https://ag.org/Beliefs/Statement-of-Fundamental-Truths#1>.

them. He said that they should shake the dust off their feet when they left that area. In that same passage, He also mentioned flogging (Matt. 10:17), arrest (Matt. 10:19), betrayal (Matt. 10:21), and persecution (Matt. 10:23). Opposition can take many forms.

After Pentecost, what happened to the Christians in Acts 4 was not a unique situation; at other times, believers experienced opposition or persecution (Acts 5:18, 27, 40; 6:12; 7:57-60; 8:1; 9:1). But they persevered in the face of these difficulties. They were not “fair weather” Christians. They stood for Jesus in the good times and in the not-so-good times; they were consistent. As Pentecostals, we need to follow their example; it is part of calling and part of our heritage. The persistence of these early believers was not solely because they were strong-willed. There was another reason for their steadfastness. Jesus had promised them power to be witnesses (Acts 1:8) and to carry on their mission; the promised power arrived a few days later (Acts 2:4). The promise still stands for us today.

Practice Prayer

The disciples’ prayer began in Acts 4:24, but the more personal part of it is found in verses 29-30. They were humble enough to know that they needed to pray. In view of their circumstances, they knew they needed help beyond themselves. They were opposed by people who had more worldly power than they did. In view of this, they made some petitions for themselves. Petition, is of course, an acceptable form of prayer, Jesus Himself endorsed it (Matt. 6:11-13; 7:7-8).

The prayer we find in our text is not the only time that these early believers prayed. We know for sure that at least some of them prayed in Acts 1, and those who believed in Jesus on the Day of Pentecost also gave themselves to prayer (Acts 2:42). So prayer was firmly rooted in the experience of these early Christians. Those who are truly Pentecostal in the twenty-first century will be people of prayer. We will follow the example of the Christians in Acts. Our prayers will be both private and, as in our text, corporate.

Let's take a look at the petitions in Acts 4:29-30. In his book *The Spirit, the Church and the World*, which I think has been rereleased under the title *The Message of Acts*, Dr. John Stott noted that the Christians in our text did not request judgment on those who opposed them or pray that their enemies' hostile statements would come to nothing.¹⁶ Instead, they asked that the Lord would empower them to speak and continue to declare the Word of the Lord boldly (Acts 4:29). The apostle Paul made a similar request for himself when he wrote to the church in Ephesus (Eph. 6:19-20). As I mentioned earlier, Pentecostals today will be people of prayer (especially since we can speak in tongues, which some have referred to as a prayer language).¹⁷ Like the believers in Acts 4, we must also pray for power. This is a prayer that is in the will of God (Acts 1:8). In addition, we should pray for the manifestation of healings and miracles as they did (Acts 4:30). These things are totally reasonable. Supernatural power was a regular part of the experience of the early church (Acts 3:1-10; 5:12, 15-16; 6:8; 8:6-7; 19:11-12), and Jesus said that the one who believes in Him will do the same type of works that He did (John 14:12). Prayer for the sick is committed to the local leadership of the church (Jas. 5:14-16), and the gifts of the Holy Spirit include both the gifts of healing and miracles (1 Cor. 12:9-10). According to Jack Deere, what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:7 appears to indicate he believed that the gifts of the Spirit would remain until Jesus returns.¹⁸ This being the case, we can pray for and expect them in our day.

Experience Power

Praying is good, and it is especially to our liking when our prayers are answered. If they are answered quickly, that is even better! In Acts 4:31, we read that the prayer of first-century

¹⁶ John Stott, *The Spirit, The Church, and the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 100.

¹⁷ R. P. Spittler, "Glossolalia," in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, edited by Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency/Zondervan, 1988), 336.

¹⁸ Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), 140.

believers was answered. While we are not told how long after they prayed that they received their answer, the text makes it sound like the Lord's response was immediate.

The power that we read about in the New Testament, including our text in Acts 4, has not been withdrawn or dissipated. This can be said with certainty, at least in part, because God remains the same (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8). Those who have a Pentecostal mindset will expect the supernatural to be part of their experience and that of their churches. A number of books document the fact that the power of God has continued well beyond the first century. Authors who have contributed significant works in this area include Stanley Frodsham, Jeff Oliver, and Craig Keener. In 1946, Stanley Frodsham wrote a book called *With Signs Following* in which he chronicled the outpouring of God's Spirit and power in a number of countries including: Sweden, France, and China.¹⁹ More recently, Jeff Oliver wrote a three-volume work called *Pentecost to the Present: The Holy Spirit's Enduring Work in the Church* in which he chronicles the outpouring of the Holy Spirit throughout church history.²⁰ In 2011, Baker Academic released Dr. Craig Keener's two-volume book *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*.²¹ In these volumes, Keener writes about various kinds of healings and miracles; he even has a section about people being raised from the dead in different parts of the world.²² Not everyone whose stories are told in these volumes was denominationally Pentecostal. However, the accounts demonstrate that the Pentecostal belief in the supernatural power of God is not an idle notion. In view of the teachings of Scripture and all of the supporting evidence of these other books, we as

¹⁹ Stanley H. Frodsham, *With Signs Following: The Story of the Pentecostal Revival in the Twentieth Century*, rev. ed. (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1946), 77-83, 85-92, 121-141.

²⁰ Jeff Oliver, *Pentecost to the Present: The Holy Spirit's Enduring Work in the Church*, 3 vols. (Newberry, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2017).

²¹ Craig S. Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011).

²² Keener, *Miracles*, vol. 1, 536-579.

Pentecostals today should continue to be bold in adhering to the supernatural legacy of the church.

People Who Know Their Purpose

From what we read in Acts 4:29, it seems as though the early believers knew about the Great Commission. I say this because they wanted to continue to share their faith. Some of them, like the apostles, had heard Jesus speak about this responsibility (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8). Those who came to faith after Jesus' ascension probably heard about the commission from those who heard the Lord (Acts 2:42). These early Pentecostals knew they had a job to do. They were not blessed just so that they could sit around and speak in tongues. They had a responsibility to share their faith with their unbelieving neighbors—indeed, with the world. As a result, they were not content to merely maintain their own fellowship; they wanted to reach out to others. What may be amazing to us is that they sought to do this even though their own comfort and safety was threatened. The prayer they prayed in Acts 4:29 was in the will of God, and as a result, it was answered (1 John 5:14-15; Acts 4:31). As I have already mentioned above, it was apparently answered quite quickly. They received a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit.

Modern-day Pentecostals are also a people of mission. We must think about those outside of the church, those who are not saved. They need to hear the message of Christ, and that requires preachers (Rom. 10:14-15). As Pentecostals, we have been empowered by the Holy Spirit for a purpose, and that purpose is to reach the lost. This must be a part of our mindset because it is part of the biblical revelation for Spirit-filled believers. Please note that *all* of the believers who were in the prayer meeting in Acts 4 were requesting boldness to speak. The evangelistic task was not viewed as the sole responsibility of the apostles; it belonged to all of God's people. The same is true today. Opposition to the preaching of the gospel is normal but so is the empowerment to meet, and overcome, the opposition. The

gospel is to go into all the world (Matt. 24:14). The growth of the Pentecostal Movement around the world demonstrates that many have taken the evangelistic mission seriously.

CONCLUSION

The subjects we have covered in this paper are not the sole domain of Pentecostals, but they are definitely key components of the Pentecostal mindset—that is, those features that delineate how a Pentecostal thinks, or should think, about certain key subjects. The Pentecostal view of Scripture is important. We let the Bible be our guide; it is the grid through which we view the world. It informs our beliefs, hopes, expectations, and practices. In view of this, we accept the harsh realities of being a Christian in this dark world. The messengers of light are resisted. We, like the believers in Acts, give prayer a place of prominence (Acts 1:13-14; 2:42; 4:24-30; 6:6; 7:59; 9:40; 12:5; 13:3). We employ it regularly but perhaps especially during times of stress, decision, and other times of need. We also experience the power of the Holy Spirit. This is in some measure due to the fact that we ask for it. Jesus said that the Father would give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him (Luke 11:13). And lastly, we know our purpose. We continue to work on the Great Commission so that the gospel may bear fruit all over the world, just as it did in the first century (Col. 1:6). May the Lord help us to stay true to our biblical Pentecostal roots.

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