

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE CONFIRMED BY DOCTRINAL ASSERTION

In a past study on the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement, we stated that one of their fatal flaws involves drawing conclusions from the historical narrative of the New Testament without any validation from a corresponding doctrinal assertion. A recent example of this consists of promoting the baptism of the Holy Spirit as necessary for power in effective service. This conclusion is derived from the Biblical account of Peter on the day of Pentecost. He experiences the baptism of the Holy Spirit and then presents the gospel to the crowd gathered there, resulting in the conversion of three thousand people to a saving faith in Christ; thereby establishing a connection between the former and the latter, as an application for today.

However, in asserting this cause-and-effect relationship, no support is provided to validate such a conclusion from the multitude of doctrinal assertions found in the epistles of the New Testament. This should not come as a surprise to anyone, since there aren't any. On the other hand, there is a prerequisite for effective service which is clearly established in the New Testament. It just isn't the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as defined by the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement. Instead, it is presented to us by the apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 2:21 –

“Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.”

The requirement for effective service is not speaking in tongues, but sincere engagement in the process known as progressive sanctification, producing spiritual growth and Christ-like maturity within the believer. This in turn qualifies that individual to be useful to their Savior for effective service. There is also a corresponding historical narrative which supports the doctrinal assertion of 2 Timothy 2:21. It is contained within the High Priestly prayer of Jesus, in John 17:15-19 –

“I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.”

Being sent into a lost and fallen world in order to minister effectively for Christ will not only require protection from the evil one while serving, but being sanctified in God's truth. The harmony between the historical narrative of John 17:15-19 and 2 Timothy 2:21 is undeniable. Further confirmation of this all-important prerequisite is provided for us in Isaiah 6:5-8, as well. When that relationship is understood, the application speaks for itself, making Pentecost perfectly relevant to the sanctification/service connection. How? Pentecost marks the beginning of a new and better covenant, with the Holy Spirit indwelling every believer (Romans 8:9); which in turn, empowers us for sanctification (Galatians 5:16-24), and qualifies us for service.

This is why it is essential for conclusions drawn from historical narratives to always receive their validation from a corresponding doctrinal assertion of New Testament text. Failure to do so, in effect, declares an open-season free-for-all to anyone who wishes to make a particular historical narrative say whatever one would like it to say. So, please don't fall for the latest Pentecostal spin which seeks to justify a belief system that exalts the practice of speaking in tongues.

Sincerely in Christ,

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