



"You will know them by their fruits." Mt. 7:16

A letter to Charles H. Parham

From: John G. Lake
103 Roy Street
Houston Texas
March 24, 1927

To: Brother Charles H. Parham
Baxter Springs, Kansas

Dear Brother Parham:

I have been wanting to write to you for a long time, but I have been so very unsettled, and when things around me get unsettled I do not write to anybody until they begin to shape again.

It would be difficult for me to explain to you how or why I am in Houston. A something grew up in my soul that I wanted to see and talk with Carothers, and it kept grinding in me so long that eventually I found myself here. Seeley D. Kinne, Carothers, and sometimes others of the preachers here and myself have been in the habit of getting together for little conferences - just to talk over our own soul state, the condition of the work in general, what God's probable next step may be in the Pentecostal work, and other things of that kind. And out of it all there has grown in me a great desire to have a good conference with yourself.

Unfortunately, when you and I get together you have so much petty detail to look after that we never get a chance to sit down and converse about anything that amounts to anything. What I am anxious to talk over with you is your vision of the future of the Pentecostal movement and whether or not any of us have sufficient light from God to know what His purpose is for this hour. Personally, I have never felt that you occupied the place in the movement that God intended you to occupy and that your endeavor to sort of father the movement, in some respects, has been rather an effort to keep from being submerged, rather than to lead the hosts of God.

While at San Diego, I was in the habit of meeting with a few of the brethren in Los Angeles, Dr. Kenyon, Cannon, Wallace, myself, and others. We would get together once in awhile and talk things over. We did not discuss just the interests of the Pentecostal movement only, but whether or not there was anything that a group of sane men could do that would be of real value to the Christian institution. The consensus of opinion was that what the Christian world is suffering for more than anything else is a lack of ideal of Christianity. The world does not know what real Christianity is. Pentecost should have exemplified it. In that it has failed, in my judgment, about 93 percent. However, it has done this much. It has demonstrated that there is such a thing as the baptism of the Holy Ghost. That men may enter into God if they will. That some have in a slight degree. That none have in an outstanding way that would make their life or revelation comparable with the apostles or the leaders of Christianity in the first centuries. We have rather been an order of cheap evangelism, with a rather cheap evangelistic message that is not worthy, in the high sense, of being called Pentecostal.

Next, my own idea was that if I were going to undertake to do for Christianity the thing that seems to me would be the greatest blessing and present to the world the ideal that it needs, I would like to do it through a sort of Bible university that first taught the full-rounded life of Jesus Christ in man.

Second, that sent into the world a group of men to give that ideal to the public.

How my own soul has longed to see yourself above every other man measure up in God to the stature of the need of this hour. And while I take my hat off to you and recognize in you a humble servant of God who has labored hard and while you have been an amazing propagandist of the truth God revealed to you, yet brother, like myself and all the others that I see, there has been an utter failure to measure up to the stature of fatherhood in God, that would mark you as the real father and leader of the Pentecostal forces.

Now, brother, I am not scolding, and I am sure that you know my deep love for the men who bear this Gospel and especially for yourself, so that you will be ready to concede my aim is not only to help you, but to help my own soul and the souls of those about us to rise up in God to be and do and give the real Pentecostal life and vision to the world.

Every little man is doing the best he can on a big job. Gaston, the head of the Assemblies of God, is endeavoring to do his best and is doing a fine work in keeping his institution orderly. True, they have drifted clear away from a true scriptural Pentecostal ideal and every day are becoming more and more a little bigoted denomination. The spirit of denominationalism in the Assemblies of God is probably narrower than even in the old churches from which Pentecostal people have been escaping for the last thirty years. So, as a power to bless mankind and put an ideal before the world such as the scriptures outline and as our soul is longing for, it does not seem to me they are worth discussing or considering.

None of the other divisions of the movement of which I know, except the movement headed by Brother Goss, holds much hope. I see more hope in Goss's division of the movement than in any of the others. There is one thing we will have to concede - and everybody does who is really intimate with their assemblies and with their preachers - and that is that they show more genuine spirituality than any other branch of the movement. The mere fact of their emphasis of Jesus, that the other divisions of the movement regard as extreme, has tended to bless them in that it has brought them into close touch with the Lord's life and Spirit.

The great mass of independent churches in the Pentecostal faith have a local status. They are all trying to do something. One of the things we are all compelled to admit is that so far as real Pentecost from God is concerned, it is rapidly dying out in the world. I believe in this connection that your own overemphasis on the question of false manifestation has done much to break down faith in God for all manifestation.

Now a personal word. For about three years I have been in a very broken state of health. About thirty years of awful strenuousness and life lived at a pace and under a pressure that few men in the world have endured for so long, has had its natural effect in me as I suspect in my soul it is having in you. And I simply had to break off and ease up. So for three years it has been a snail's pace. But, brother, the thing has wrought a marvel in me. With the quiet and semi-rest, even though forced upon me, there has come an expanding vision and a profound conviction that somehow, if this is real Pentecost, there must come out of it eventually the thing that Pentecost produced in the early church and that was the real body of Jesus Christ. Not a church but *the* Church; not an organization, but the real organism that we have always recognized; not an ecclesiasticism, nor a dictatorship, nor a bureaucracy; but a group of Holy Ghost-baptized souls in which dwells and through which is manifest, the life of the Lord.

In the New Testament church we see the Church was a "minister of life unto life," and of "death unto death." The same Holy Ghost, through Peter, flashed out like a sword of glory and smote the disease from the lame man at the Beautiful Gate, was the same sword that flashed out of his spirit and sent Ananias and Sapphira to the graveyard. Maybe God has changed His mind. Perhaps the Church of Jesus Christ is not a church anymore - just a mob. Probably Paul was mistaken when he gave us the church outline in the twelfth of Corinthians.

However, I cannot think so; I am rather inclined to feel, brother, that we have been too small for God's uses and purposes in this matter. And one of the objects of my writing this letter is to ask your soul, as the oldest man in this movement and the one whom God honored in the formulation of its first message and the establishment of the school that was first honored with this latter day outpouring, if you have any message for my soul, or any revelation from God along this line? What does the future hold to you; what is the hope of the future? Or are we to simply witness the dying of Pentecost as other lesser revelations of God have come to the world, fluttered and sputtered for a few years, and then disappeared?

It seems to me that the test as to whether this is real Pentecost or not is in the fact that if it is, through it must be developed the Church of Jesus Christ. Not only as a scattered, one here and one there, unknown to each other, invisible, unrecognized, and unauthoritative body, whose names are written in heaven, but a Holy Ghost-united, authoritative, and God-controlled and God-directed and God empowered body, through whom God could meet the challenge of Rome and hell and antichrist and every other institution of the devil that the latter days bring forth.

What my soul would give for one real council in God of the now hidden, wearied, discouraged, distracted, heartbroken Pentecostal preachers.

You will be interested to know that Mr. and Mrs. Stanley, who were in your Bible school when the baptism originally fell at Topeka, are members of my congregation here. I recently met another of that group, but have forgotten at this moment who it was.

Now, brother, about Africa. Did you know that Brother Fockler was in Africa this last year and recently went on to Australia? We had word from him recently telling us about his reception at Melbourne, that was very fine. Fockler is a fine evangelist, a man of sane mind, and is one of the growing men in this movement. One of the things, Parham, that is troubling me is that yourself, Fockler, Sinclair, myself, and the hundred others that constituted the original missionaries of this Gospel, are slipping toward the graveyard very rapidly. We are shouting loudly about living until Jesus comes, but one by one our toes are preparing to be grass root extensions. And I have always hoped that before we who saw the first glory and the first sunburst of power passed on, that we would leave behind us something that would at least conserve its history and embody its spirit and continue to bless the world.

The devil has robbed me financially since my breakdown in health, so that now when I am on my feet again and ready to go I am greatly handicapped for lack of resources. You talk of going to Africa. I would like to know definitely if you have plans to that end or are you just "hoping"? I would like to go better than anything else in the world, but unless God would perform a financial miracle it is an impossibility.

Indeed, I am at a loss to know just why I am in Houston. The church at Spokane is crying for my return. By the way, I was there for a week this winter before Christmas. I went from here to pray for an insane woman, who was instantly delivered, and I remained and preached for a week. The church at Portland begs me to come there; the little church at San Diego is moving along. All of them present a better opportunity than Houston. However, in all my life I never saw such distracted, petrified, soul-bound saints as in Houston. The dear little group at Katy are a lovely, godly group. The Richeys are a group of little men with little minds, trying to fill big men's places in life and in the work of God. It is pitiable and laughable to watch the trick monkey stuff. Dad Richey is extremely jealous, insanely so, and this causes him to stoop to such dishonorable little things as no one could believe unless you were on the ground and saw it. It always makes me think of a bantam rooster among a flock of decent-sized chickens. The only thing the bantam can do is strut, and sure dear old Dad is a fine strutter.

Now, Brother, for the finish. What I am interested in is, has God developed in you a sense of fatherhood in this Gospel? Is your little missionary work the fulfillment of your ideal? My soul cannot help but turn to you for an answer. And though in times past your answers have been somewhat childish I cannot help but feel that with increasing years and gray hairs that perhaps God has honored you with the answer to the need of this hour as He once honored you with the answer to the need of thirty years ago.

One thing I observe however, is that the truth of the origin of the Pentecostal movement and its origin in your school at Topeka and the fact that you formulated the first Pentecostal message to the world is growing and is daily becoming a better known fact. So that now, even the prejudices of the Assemblies of God cannot submerge that truth and neither can Florence Crawford of Portland, Oregon, get the world to believe any longer that she was the first white woman baptized in the Holy Ghost after Pentecost came. And the people of Los Angeles cannot use it much further for a Los Angeles advertising stunt.

In my spirit I have been troubled about you. The last time I saw you, you were too fat. You were eating too much and manifestly, you were eating more meat than a man of your years can assimilate without producing blood pressure and heart strain. I am not aware that my advice or council ever did any good - that you have paid any

more attention to it than I have to yours. However, I do want to assure you, brother, of my deep heartfelt interest and continued prayer for you. I will never forget the man who brought the glorious message of Pentecost and all that it has meant to both hell and heaven in my life.

Dear Parham, it is said here that you are coming to Houston in June for a campmeeting. I would like to know definitely what your plans are in that respect, as we have been planning a campmeeting to begin around May 1st and continue straight through the whole summer, and I would like to be able to formulate some idea. It was my hope in this campmeeting to be able to secure the real leaders of the movement for at least a couple of weeks at a time. And yet, I do not want to interfere with any personal plans that you may have.

One of these days I trust God Almighty will get me off of the rocks, at least to that extent that I can send you a respectable offering for your paper, which I prize very much.

Your Brother in Christ,

JGL/FL

Dear Brother Parham:

This is a new epistle according to "John." When are you coming around for another race? Am afraid I will lose my speed if you don't come and keep me in practice. We have your little friend Ida in our home, and we think a great deal of her.

Florence M. Lake

So here it is, these many years later and it certainly is time to grasp the nettle, but which nettle do we grasp? Leadership is one thing, but knowing where to lead to is another: Great Awakening preachers found that when they preached the things of salvation mixed with a gentle call for every believer to go on to obtain entire sanctification, it brought far greater challenge and devotion to souls of every degree....

Were I to have a chance to respond to Lake, I would strongly exhort him to preach more holiness every day. Lake himself said that the greatest worth of healing is building faith. That is also true for every other gift.

But obtaining a pure heart wholly acceptable in His sight is of far greater worth; for the former is the raw sap of faith and hope, while the latter is the joyous fruit of His costly favor. Palpable fruit endures, while faith often rises and falls with circumstance. Yes, the finished work of dwelling in His very Presence is of far greater worth.

So I would say that the words of greatest significance above were the ones NOT SAID. They were missing the best part, and not even realizing it. They took the established Holiness grace for granted since it is a far quieter grace. It is also not so popular since it is so tough to obtain and so convicting.

Not only that, but "watching miracles" is often spectacular entertainment, and not involvement. The living gospel is no spectator sport as we have made it into.

Did you catch this point of the "Ichabod" page? When the style of the early "bands" in "Pioneer Days of the Holiness Movement in the Southwest" is contrasted with "The Church in the Wilderness", the picture is breathtaking. So much so that I did not want to spell it out on the website.

And these powerful ministers in the bands did not understand the operation of gifts as we do.... O but they knew persistent faithful prayer....

Yours in His Most Excellent Service;

Tom Plumb

This article was selected from "John G. Lake, The Complete Collection of His Life Teachings" by Roberts Liardon.

Albury Publishing, 992 pages. -from pages 474- 480

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