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Preface to Pentecost

Tongues of fire and utterances of ecstasy broke out on the *Upper Room* assemblage. Pentecost arrived with a most unusual proclamation. Never, since the *Tower of Babel*, had there been such a phenomenal linguistic demonstration. A variety of languages were spoken that these men obviously did not know by their ethnicity.

“What is the meaning of this?” was the question of the day. One of the twelve, Peter, answered the question with a prophetic pronouncement, “This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:16). The demonstration declared the day of fulfillment. The Spirit of God was being poured out on “all flesh.” The diversity of languages seen as the dividing occurrence at the *Tower of Babel* became the unifying force as God moved to bring all nations together into one spiritual body.

From that grand birth of the church and the initial outpouring of Holy Spirit power, the *good news* has spread to many languages of the world. Until now, more unlearned tongues are heard as new attentive ears hear and receptive hearts believe the simple, yet profound, Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Pentecost is powerful, experiential, and emotive. Pentecost is doing. It's action. It's motivational. Common to the experience is the conviction that the enduing power of the Holy Spirit exempts dependence on grace. Who needs grace to compensate for weakness when you have the *dunamis*¹ of the Spirit to overcome the frailties of the flesh? There is a sense that in spiritual maturity grace no longer matters and that mercy is muted by dynamic demonstration. Frequently, the miracle of the Pentecostal experience precludes the granting of the gift of grace. What He *is* is over-shadowed by what He *does*. So, sometimes grace is displaced, and *being* is replaced with *doing*.

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Down the road a few days, weeks, or perhaps even years, there comes an awakening, a *coming-to-yourself* experience. The action, the doing, the emotion has run its course and you experience a sudden surge of recognition that you are still plagued by the flesh. You are still susceptible to the scourge of sin. You find you need more

¹ English transliteration of the Greek δύνμις (doo'-nam-is), primarily meaning *strength, power, or ability*.

than a *tongues* experience, more than a shout or a dance, more than sharing a testimony or a personal prophecy. You need something that perhaps you have heard very little of – the *grace of God*.

Oh, you may say, “I experienced that when I was a sinner. You know, ‘*Saved by grace*’.” So you have learned the cute clichés and trite testimonies, but it’s not much in the way of understanding what the wonderful work of grace is all about.

My own search for definition has led to the scope of this writing. Oh, I have heard about the *unmerited favor of God*, but I still haven’t found a definition that totally satisfies me. Maybe that’s the way it should be. His grace should always be bigger than any box we could build around it. In reality, grace is as big as God. When we are able to measure the magnitude of God and establish the boundaries of his magnificence, *then* we can define grace.

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If it were possible to define the dimension of grace it would likewise be possible to set a limit to its length or place a boundary on its breadth. When anything becomes definable, it can be grasped, and what is grasped can be contained, and once contained it becomes limited. *Grace can never be like that*. May it always exceed our definition, extend beyond the reach of our grasp and remain free of our conceptual container.

So often grace is the missing segment to an unfulfilled Christian life. From the internal realm of Pentecostal circles, I see the concentric lines that separate us from reliance on grace. We have expected the power of the Holy Ghost and obedience to the Word to produce something that can never be realized outside of the total acceptance of God's great grace.

Before you close this book and mumble something about being "*contaminated with the charismatics*" – please take a read. Maybe you will agree with me by the last chapter that *GRACE IS A PENTECOSTAL MESSAGE!*