

Pentecost Is Not Optional: For revival to spread like wildfire, it must begin with the Spirit's powerful flame

We are living in a special time in history, and I believe we are on the verge of the next great awakening in America. To see God's will be done on earth, we need the flame of heaven. We will look at a powerful and timely passage from Acts 10 where we see revival break out to the Gentiles for the first time. But before we get to this story, I want to share a powerful story of how the flame of heaven fell supernaturally upon my family.

The flame of heaven was never meant to just be given to one person; it was meant to spread. Fire is contagious and spreads until it is contained or put out. The flame should be passed to other and future generations. My flame is a direct result of my prior generations.

God is a generational God; what he starts in one He wants to continue into the next. I will always be grateful for the battles and victories of the past generations. I also commit to taking even more ground for Him.

It was a winter day in Moldova when the flame of the Holy Spirit fell on my grandparents in 1960. They lived in the years of the Soviet Union, a godless government that not only forbade Christianity but also persecuted anyone who became a Christian, forcing its communist ideology as supreme law.

An evangelist came from another country, teaching about Jesus to everyone he saw and gathered people for evening meetings. Until that time my grandfather, Andrey Melnik, never thought

he would accept Christianity. My grandma, Anisya, had heard about Jesus but not put her faith in Him, so the two lived for years with no faith at all—until the day this evangelist told them about Jesus.

Receiving the Fire

My grandpa was home alone on the day he decided to get on his knees and pray a dangerous prayer: “God, if You are real, the God my wife has been telling me about, prove Yourself to me.”

That moment, as he opened his heart to Jesus, the Holy Spirit filled him, and he spoke in tongues. God’s presence was so strong that he began to vibrate and shake. This lasted for hours. My grandmother had not yet experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit because those who told her about Jesus did not teach or believe in that manifestation of faith. But when she came home and saw her husband praying in tongues, vibrating and wet so that even the carpet around him was soaked with a thick, oil-like substance, she was afraid, thinking he had gone crazy. “Are you OK?” she asked.

“This is the manifestation of the God you’ve been telling me about,” he responded. “Grab my hand and get on your knees beside me.” When she did, she was also instantly baptized in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues.

Along with the gift of speaking in tongues, Anisya also received regular, vivid visions from God from that day forward. Soon afterward, as more and more people came to faith in Christ, my grandfather became the pastor of a church in his small city just outside Kishinev, the capital of Moldova, and oversaw three other churches in nearby villages.

At that time, Christianity was completely underground, and Christians were persecuted severely. My mother, age 10, received Christ as Savior at the same time as my grandparents, then in their mid-30s. She was mocked by teachers and sent to a room where officials tried to intimidate her and convince

her away to renounce her decision.

My father, Yuri, was also a first-generation Christian; he gave his life to Christ at 16 years old. He remembered believing in a greater power, a force, as he grew up, one with which he would even communicate at times. So when, living in Kishinev, he first heard the gospel message, he instantly knew it was real and surrendered his life to Christ, learning about the Holy Spirit a short time afterward.

He received the teaching and was baptized in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. His intense, physical experience so filled him with love that he went up to strangers on the street, hugging them and releasing the love of God over them. He prayed for his family to accept Jesus, and one by one, beginning with his parents, they did.

My father went on to become a preacher of the underground church. He loved preaching on subjects such as faith in God, having an intimate relationship with Him and believing in the impossible.

He fell in love with the Bible, but at that time there was no literature or recorded teaching. His theology may not have been polished, but it was built in full dependence on the Holy Spirit. For him and those he taught, the flame of heaven was not an option but an absolute necessity.

I grew up experiencing this communist Soviet Union persecution. We were not allowed to have open church meetings. In fact, every time we held a prayer meeting in our house, the authorities would come in and break it apart. We would find out later that the government had bugged our house. Every time my father was caught, he was fined as much as three months' salary. We would find our tires slashed, our car windows broken. We met in forests for church services, and if we were caught, our pastors were beaten and some thrown into prison.

My parents' pastor and close friend was imprisoned for 23

years. There, he was beaten and constantly interrogated in an attempt to get him to renounce Christ. One day, authorities had enough of it, so they ordered one of the inmates to take a long knife and kill him for his faith. When the inmate tried to attack him, the pastor commanded his arm to be still in the name of Jesus. The inmate was unable to move his arm at all. Terrified, he realized that the power of this pastor's God was greater than his. After the pastor prayed for the inmate's arm to move again, he and many others gave their lives to the Lord.

Carrying the Flame

In 1989 when I was 6 years old, many persecuted Christians were immigrating to the U.S. My family, led by the Holy Spirit, had the rare opportunity to immigrate to this great nation as refugees. At the time we were a family of eight: my father, Yuri; mother, Larisa; and six children. I was the thirdborn.

A small Foursquare church in North Idaho sponsored our family's immigration. The church people taught us everything we needed to know in our brand-new country and culture.

At that time many Russian-speaking churches formed with refugees from Moldova, Ukraine, Russian, Belarus, Bulgaria and other countries. When we immigrated to Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, my father started a small church right away. We worshipped freely for the first time in our lives, having powerful services that lasted several hours. We held church services as often as five times a week, enjoying our newfound freedom.

This is when the flame was passed on to me, the next generation, as I received Christ. When I was 10 years old, I loved going to Monday-night prayer services because they were always so powerful. I saw many people get baptized in the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues, and I asked God to baptize me too.

I will never forget this moment. When I received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, I felt such a weighty presence of God come over me that I wept and prayed in this new tongue for hours. This marked the beginning of a new confidence and boldness that came upon my life.

At 16 years old, I began to preach at my youth ministry, going on to become a full-time minister after graduating from college. I have now had the opportunity to travel all over the world preaching the gospel of Jesus, visiting about 45 nations and 41 states. My current ministry is called Be Moved. With a three-part focus. I am called to reach, raise and release: Reach people around the world with the gospel of Jesus, raise disciples who know their identity and authority in Christ and release influencers to transform culture.

Because of the legacy I carry from my grandparents and parents, I know I am called to activate the next generation of believers into their calling, and I get to see the presence and power of the Holy Spirit come upon them. I have seen countless miracles and supernatural healings. I have seen my daughter resurrected from the dead and many delivered from demonic oppression, all by the flame from heaven, the person of the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Paul says it brilliantly in the last verse written to the Corinthian church, showing us the Godhead in three persons, or Trinity, each with their main attribute: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all" (2 Cor. 13:14, NASB).

The Greek word *koinónia* means partnership, participation, sharing, contribution. We must have a deep fellowship with the person of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible contains many symbols of the Holy Spirit to help us understand different sides of the Holy Spirit. We see symbols

such as dove, flame, oil, wind and water. But He is a person who wants a relationship with us. The Bible shows us that this flame, the Holy Spirit Himself, loves us, and in that love comes powerful prayers. Romans 15:29-30 says that Paul comes to them “by the love of the [Holy] Spirit.”

The apostle Paul here shows us the importance of prayer, begging these believers to intercede on his behalf. Prayers such as these come by the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of the Spirit. True fellowship with Him releases the flame in our prayers.

Releasing the Spirit

In Acts 10, we see the spread of revival. For the first time in history, the gospel that had come to the Jews was now being spread to the Gentiles, an example of how the revival flame can come upon us.

Starting in verse 1, we see Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort. Devout, God-fearing and generous, he prayed to God continually. If we want to see the move of God come to us, this is a great place to start.

When we bless what God is doing through someone else, it releases that blessing into our lives. This is what Cornelius did.

Cornelius also prayed to God. Even though he did not yet have a relationship with Him, he saw what the Jews did and wanted to do the same. It reminded me of my father, who prayed to God from his childhood but was unaware of what was happening when he did.

In verse 4, we see that in this atmosphere, the angel of the Lord came to Cornelius, directing him to send for Peter, who was also praying and received a history-shifting vision while in a trance.

When Peter fell into the trance, he saw what Jewish tradition had deemed unclean (verses 11-13), and a voice told him to do what he had never done as a Jew: "Get up, Peter, kill and eat" (v. 13).

"By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean" (v. 14).

How easy is it for us to get offended by something new that God is trying to do?

Three times the voice had to tell Peter not to call unclean what He had already cleansed (v. 15).

This was a much bigger revelation than Peter being free to eat pork and shellfish. Jews would call Gentiles "unclean" or "unholy" because they did not follow the same religious laws. And now God is telling Peter that He has cleansed them already; they just didn't have anyone to tell them the Good News of the gospel.

Peter goes with Cornelius' men into Gentile territory and into a Gentile's house, both forbidden places according to religious and cultural law. But from verse 28 to 40, we see Peter preaching the pure and simple gospel of Jesus.

We then reach my favorite part of the story. The phrase "all the prophets testify of Him" (v. 43) means until that moment, all the prophets were declaring that Jesus was the one to come who would be the Savior and deliverer of mankind. The next phrase is powerful: "Through his name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins" (emphasis added). The word "forgiveness" is the Greek word *aphesis*, which means "freedom," "to cancel or pardon."

Everyone who believes shows that grace comes by faith alone. Forgiveness is a gift to receive, not a wage to be earned. And we know that all our sins—past, present and future—were dealt with on the cross (Heb. 9:26).

Spreading the Flame

On the night He rose from the dead, Jesus instructed his disciples to preach the Good News of the complete forgiveness or remission of all sins (Luke 24:36-48). This is what Peter was preaching right before the flame of heaven fell on them also.

I love that this happened while Peter was still preaching how Jesus died, paid for their sins and made them righteous (Acts 10:44). In God's eyes, they were no longer unclean. They believed this message, were instantly filled with the Holy Spirit and began to pray in tongues (v. 46). There was no teaching about the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues.

This is how the flame of heaven began to spread to the rest of mankind and is still being spread today. It fell upon my grandparents, parents and me. Now, I am compelled to share the same message Peter preached to this next generation. Everyone can receive this flame: the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It's what this generation needs to see the next great awakening poured out on our land.

Did you know all eight authors of the New Testament spoke in tongues? Matthew, John and Peter (apostles) along with James and Jude (brothers of Jesus) were all in the upper room when all received the flame and spoke in tongues. Paul says "I speak in tongues more than you all" (1 Cor 14:18b).

Mark and Luke are the last two authors of the New Testament; we do not have a verse of Scripture that explicitly tells us whether or not they spoke in tongues. However, we do know with certainty that they were close friends and traveling companions of Paul and were very active in ministry in the early church.

Since we know the importance Paul places on speaking in tongues, it is almost certain that Mark and Luke received the

gift. It is unlikely that he would lead strangers into this experience (Acts 19:1-6) but not his close friends.

When you pray in tongues, the devil can't understand it, so he can't send his darts to stop what God wants to do. When you pray in tongues, you always pray the perfect will of God. You never have to worry if what you are praying is accurate because God Himself is praying through you. When you pray, don't look for tongues or some other manifestation; instead, look to the person of the Holy Spirit, and the tongues will come.

When we receive Him, we receive what is in and of Him. The flame of heaven is a free gift for everyone who wants to receive it.

Meesh Fomenko *is a Slavic-American evangelist based in Southern California. He spends most of his time discipling the younger generation.*