

11

A Man's Concentration

Acts 2:25

A great crowd of Jews *from every nation under heaven* are listening intently to Peter's explanation of Pentecost. They earnestly seek an answer to the question, "*Whatever could this mean?*" (Acts 2:12). The Holy Spirit moves on Peter! Cultural environment and tradition have nothing to do with the explanation. This message comes from the heart of God. Peter uses quotes from the Old Testament in a very impressive manner. As he explains the life of Jesus, Peter matches his personal statements with quotes from the Scriptures. There are as many verses dedicated to the statements of Scripture in his message as are dedicated to his personal insights.

Peter begins with the prophecy of Joel (Acts 2:16-21). The one hundred and twenty believers are experiencing an event that God planned and promised for many years. This is the fulfillment of *I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh* (Acts 2:17). Peter then gives a practical life explanation in the next three verses (Acts 2:22-24). God authenticated the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in *Jesus of Nazareth, a Man*. He did it through the life of Christ, His death, and His resurrection. All that was true of Jesus is now true for us. We have just entered into a new intimacy with God.

Peter bases this thought on a Psalm of David (Psalm 16:8-11). He begins his statement with a Greek word translated *for* (Acts 2:25). It is the Greek word "gar" which is a causative particle. It expresses the reason for what has been. But often this Greek word assumes a reaction on the part of the hearer to what has gone before and gives, in its clause, the reasons for this reaction. No doubt Peter anticipated astonishment from the Jews of the Dispersion. After all, they had been responsible for the crucifixion of Christ. How could they have missed the

wonder of what God was doing in this Man? What was taking place in Christ is the highest spiritual reality God has planned for mankind. It is almost to startling to grasp!

What is the basis of this? How could God fill a man, even *Jesus of Nazareth*? They have been carefully looking for the “new thing” which God is going to accomplish. They recognize it in the experience of the one hundred and twenty disciples. How could they have missed it in Christ? How can they now enter into this experience after what they did to Christ?

Peter anticipates their reaction and takes them back to their Scriptures. It is here we clearly see the fundamental truth which opens the possibility of all God wants to do within us. It is found in this Psalm (16:8-11). Above all other Psalms this one is especially considered a “Messianic Psalm.” At the original writing of the Psalm, David writes concerning himself. This is the wonder of the Scriptures! God says something through David which goes far beyond the scope of his life. As Peter points out in his sermon, there is absolutely no way this Psalm could apply or be fulfilled in David. Peter says, “*Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day,*” (Acts 2:29). Since David is both *dead and buried* among them, this Messianic Psalm could not be about him. It is *Jesus of Nazareth, a Man* in whom this Psalm is fulfilled. The flow of God’s life through Christ, which produced His life, His death, and now His resurrection, fulfills the details of this Psalm in every way.

However, there is additional information and details given to us within this quotation of the Psalm. Up to this time the entire focus has been on God who initiated and sourced all that took place in Jesus. But what was the inward spiritual condition which allowed this to happen? How could Jesus maintain this flow of the Holy Spirit in every activity? This seems to be the personal question which we consistently ask. Sometime, at my best moments, I can experience God sourcing me, but how do I maintain this moment by moment? How can I maintain the consistent sourcing of the Spirit of God in my life? This is the most practical aspect of this spiritual reality. We all agree about the power of God, and we certainly embrace the fact that God loves us all. But how do I live in this every day in all situations? What is the key factor which releases this reality within me?

Peter’s sermon is an explanation of Pentecost to the Jews of the Dispersion. What is presently in the one hundred and twenty disciples is exactly what was and is within Jesus. What God is doing in and through Jesus is made plain. Now through the statements of David, Peter highlights the attitude present within Jesus which releases this resource. This must be the same attitude or spiritual condition within us, if we are to experience the same sourcing. What is this condition?

Look anew at the quotation of King David,

I foresaw the Lord always before my face,

For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken (Acts 2:25).

Remember this is a Messianic Psalm. David is writing these words about himself, but God intended it concerning Christ. With this in mind, it is as if Jesus is speaking these words about Himself.

The Greek word translated *foresaw* must be understood in light of the completed phrase, *always before my face*. This is a strong statement. The strength of the focus cannot be overstated. It is all consuming, all encompassing, and God the Father is appearing in the presence of Jesus. The absolute focus and concentration of *Jesus of Nazareth, a Man* upon His *Lord* (Father) is overpowering; it is as if there is nothing else.

The Greek word translated *before . . . face* is actually two words combined. The first Greek word would be translated “in.” It has the idea of “in, on, at, and by any place or thing, with the major idea of resting.” The object is neither moving nor going any place. It is compared with the Greek word “eis” which is translated “into” and implies motion. Another Greek word of comparison is “ek” which is translated “from” which indicates motion out of. Therefore, the Greek word translated *before* actually means “remaining in place.” The second Greek word translated *face* can also be translated “eye” or “countenance.” The meaning of the statement is that something has come to rest in the very eye, face, or presence of the individual. All of this indicates a strong focus.

This is further emphasized by the Greek word translated *my* which is a part of this same phrase, *before my face*. This Greek word is an emphatic form of me or mine. It is a statement of ownership. Since this is a Messianic Psalm, Jesus states this about Himself. Obviously He refers to His Father. The Father is the object which is in the very eye of Christ without any motion of coming or going. He is the permanent fixture or the remaining vision of Christ. Jesus takes ownership of this focus.

This is further emphasized with the word *always*. It is an interesting translation. This is one of those few places where one English word is the translation for two Greek words. Most often it is the reverse. It is not a compound word, but two different and separate Greek words. The first word is often translated “through,” “during,” or “with.” It implies motion through a place. In our passage, time is the issue. This gives us the meaning of continued time or indefinite time. It can be used in the sense of throughout or during as in “during the whole night,” (Luke 5:5), “during forty days,” (Acts 1:3). The second word contains the idea of oneness, totality, or the whole. When these two Greek words are used together, the idea of “through the entire time” is conveyed. Thus, we have the translation *always*.

We have a double emphasis on the consistency of what is happening. Something has come to rest in the very eye, face, and presence of Christ. It is consistently there throughout time. Nothing is more valuable to Him. Not even the most startling of events distracts Him. Whenever we come close to Him, this one factor is present. This gives content to the opening statement from our text, *“I foresaw the Lord.”*

Do not lose sight of the fact that this is a Messianic Psalm, a statement concerning Christ. The Greek word translated *foresaw* is a compound word. The two words are “before” and “see.” It can have the meaning of seeing something before or previously. However, in our passage this verb is in the middle voice. This means that it has to do with personal preference. It means to see before oneself, having before one’s eyes, or figuratively, of what one has vividly in mind. This verb is in the indicative mood which means it is a simple statement of fact. There is no argument involved. It is in the imperfect tense. It is an action which took place in the past but continues into the present. This also verifies the continuing action of *always*. The focus of *Jesus of Nazareth, a Man* cannot be questioned. He lives with a constant focus on His Father.

His mind is constantly aware (practicing His presence) of the presence of the Father. There is no variation. This is the one fundamental, unchanging, and never-ceasing factor of His life.

In order to be certain we understand the importance of this focus, he adds another key phrase: ***For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.*** He begins this statement with a conjunction, ***for.*** It is a different Greek word than found at the beginning of this section (Acts 2:25, see discussion above). This Greek word is most often translated “that” or “because.” He gives the basis or reason for his above statement. ***Jesus of Nazareth, a Man*** is sourced by the very Spirit of God. The spiritual condition which enables this filling is His constant (***always***) focus upon the Father. How is this focus maintained? He is now going to state the reason!

The key to this statement is found in the subject and the verb, ***He is.*** In the Greek language this is one word. It is the third person singular of the Greek verb translated “to be.” He highlights the state of being, not the doing of the Father. The “I am’s” of Jesus come from this verb. The focus of Jesus is upon the Father’s Person. The Father does not visit Jesus to give Him instruction. It is not during times of great distress that Jesus calls upon the Father and the Father comes to Him. No, Jesus is in intimate relationship with the Father. The presence of the Father (state of being) comes into His very eye, face, and presence. He is not using the Father for His personal advantage. Jesus is not forced to focus on the Father for without Him He will fail. This is not a means to an end. Circumstances cannot affect this focus because it is not about Christ’s personal gain. Jesus is captured by the Father, because the Father is actually there. It is a state of being.

Jesus describes it as ***at my right hand.*** In the ancient world, a bodyguard always stood on the right side of the one he was protecting. In this position he could cover him with his shield and still have his right arm free to fight. The right hand is also mentioned because that was the place of dignity and honor. In our passage, the right hand is used in reference to the entire person. The Father is in the dominant position in relationship to Christ. It is another way of saying what He has already said. The Father has captured the very eye of Christ. The Father is in the very face of Christ until He can see nothing else. No circumstances can get between Christ and the Father. His concentration is stronger than any interference!

There is another important emphasis made in the Greek word translated ***at.*** The actual Greek word is “ek.” The statement is ***He is ek my right hand.*** This Greek word is contrasted with “apo.” Both of these Greek words imply motion away from an object. However, “apo” refers distinctly to this motion coming from nearby or around the object, while “ek” always relates to the motion coming from within the object.

This presents two outstanding insights into the concentration of Christ upon His Father. The presence of the Father, while it is a state of being, is also in motion. We should not be surprised concerning this truth. We discover it repeatedly in the Scriptures. Jesus is focused on the Father not because of what the Father is doing, but because of what He is being. However, the state of being is one of great action and accomplishment. The Father’s state of being is so powerful it can be described as motion. The energy of the Father’s state of being always affects and changes everything around it. The Father defeats every enemy of Christ. It is not a defense of doing, but His very presence defeats the enemy.

This tremendous truth is coupled with the fact that the motion is from within. The action of the state of being is from the very heart or nature of God Himself. The focus of Christ is not upon a facsimile of the Father. Christ is not captured by a portrait or statue of the Father or even ideas about Him. Christ is not focused on an organization or career; this is not theological or conceptual. The Father Himself, state of being, who is in motion within Jesus has absolutely mastered His vision.

Jesus was twelve years of age (Luke 2:42). During the Feast of the Passover His family took Him to Jerusalem. As they left Jerusalem, they assumed Jesus was in the company with which they were traveling. They had gone an entire day's journey when they realized He was not with them. It took an entire day to return to Jerusalem. They searched another three days for Him throughout the city. In desperation, they went to the temple to seek Divine aid. There He was! They must have been very stern with Him (Luke 2:48). His patient answer was, "**Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?**" (Luke 2:49). In the Greek text, the word *business* is not there, but is added for clarification in the English. Jesus' statement was, "**Did you not know I must be about My Father?**" Even at age twelve Jesus recognized His dominant focus! It is the Father; His state of existence (*I must be*) was the Father. Nothing else is going on in His life.

This is intimately connected to Peter's explanation of Pentecost. Jesus is the clear and precise explanation of the fullness of the Holy Spirit. He is sourced by the Spirit of the Father. This is maintained consistently because Jesus is totally focused on the Father. The very nature of the Father fills Jesus and sources Him, and it is this same nature which consumes His vision. His very eye becomes filled with the state of being of the Father's presence.

The consistency of the focus of Christ upon the Father allows the constant sourcing of the Holy Spirit. This is highlighted again in the final phrase of our passage. He says, "**that I may not be shaken.**" This clause must be seen in the context of Christ's focus on the Father which allows the sourcing. The Messiah must not be shaken from this focus. This must be constant in His life if He is to know the constant resourcing of the Spirit of the Father. What will enable Jesus to maintain this focus? It will not be the power of His mind or discipline. This will not come about because He wills it to be so. The phrase begins with two Greek words translated *that*. It is a phrase consisting of "in order that" or "not." When these are combined it means "in order not," "so that not," or "rest." Why has the Father come in His moving state of being? Why has the Father come to remain in a constant position in the eye of Christ? He does so to keep the focus constant. The One who is responsible for the constant focus is the Father! The Father enables the focus; the Father is the focus; the Father fills and sources the focus. There is no way to be distracted if Jesus responds to the Father.

He climaxes this last clause with *shaken*. In the context of our passage, it expresses the idea of wavering, to move back and forth. It is in the subjunctive mood which suggests a possibility. It is not a certainty, but is desired. The consistent flow of the Holy Spirit sourcing the life of the Messiah is one of focus. It is hopeful that His focus will remain constant, but it is not guaranteed. The Messiah must respond to the Father's presence (state of being), Who has come to be in His eye.

All of this is to explain Pentecost to the Jews of the Dispersion. What has happened in the lives of one hundred and twenty disciples is exactly what was and is taking place in Jesus.

He was sourced by the Spirit of God. He lived in total dependence and surrender to the flowing resource of God. How could He maintain this on such a consistent basis? It was because of His focus! His gaze was fixed on the Father. He never wavered from this view. But even this was not produced by His will or determination. The Father came and captured Him. The Father was constantly on His right hand. The Father surrounded, encompassed, and enveloped Him. There was no struggle to remain focused. He relaxed in the presence of the Father and responded to His love.

This is now promised to us! Jesus said, “*As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love,*” (John 15:9). He also said, “*As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me,*” (John 6:57). Is there anything else needed? Could I respond and rest in Him?