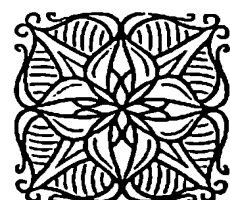
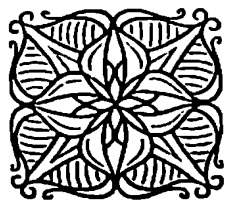


*SHOULD
WE EXPECT
ANOTHER
PENTECOST ?*

*By
H. P. Barker*



The Central Bible Truth Depôt,
12 Paternoster Row, London, E.C.



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**Should we expect
another Pentecost ?**

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SHOULD WE EXPECT ANOTHER PENTECOST?

PROBABLY the question at the head of this paper is not new to the reader. So much is being said upon the subject in certain quarters just now, and such extraordinary powers are claimed by those who profess to have received “*a Pentecostal blessing*,” that many Christians are seriously asking what it all means. At conferences and conventions speakers exhort their hearers to pray for “a return of Pentecostal times,” and for “a Pentecostal experience.” If certain excesses have brought discredit upon the movement, it is none the less true that “the Pentecostal movement” itself is forcing the question upon Christians everywhere: Is it of God? Is it scriptural? *Ought* we to expect, and pray for, another Pentecost?

In pursuing this inquiry, let us first ask,

WHY IS ANOTHER PENTECOST CONSIDERED SO DESIRABLE?

Turning to the second chapter of Acts, we find that four things marked the day of Pentecost, as a result of the coming of the Holy Ghost.

1. *Wonderful unity*.—If the disciples “were

all with one accord in one place " at the dawn of that never-to-be-forgotten day, they were still more closely united with one another and with all who were added to them from that day forward. " All that believed were together . . . continuing daily with one accord " (*vv.* 44, 46).

2. *Wonderful experience*.—A sudden sound, like mighty wind in motion ; an appearance of cloven tongues of fire resting upon each ; these were the experiences that accompanied the filling of the disciples with the Holy Ghost (*vv.* 2-4).

3. *Wonderful manifestations*.—It so happened that Jerusalem was a most cosmopolitan city on the day of Pentecost. Men were there from distant Parthia and Media, and from all the outlying parts of the empire. To all this great multitude evidence was offered of the marvellous thing that had happened, by the fact of a company of unlettered Galileans speaking with other tongues, so that " every man heard them speak in his own language " (*vv.* 4-6). Truly an astonishing testimony !

4. *Wonderful power*.—When Peter stood up to preach Christ on that memorable occasion, his hearers were " pricked in their heart." Conviction seized the souls of the people, and not only Peter, but all the other apostles were beset with earnest inquirers, crying, " What shall we do ? " Further exhortation followed,

and no less than three thousand “gladly received his word” (v. 41).

Those who are so earnestly praying for another Pentecost would probably tell us that they desire a renewal of these four wonderful things. Instead of the Church being torn by divisions they would like to see a re-establishment of the original unity, when sectional differences were unknown, and brotherly love was the atmosphere breathed by all. They look for a widespread filling of the Holy Spirit with the natural and inevitable result of rich and blessed experiences. They expect that once again evidence should be forthcoming in the shape of supernatural utterances, and lastly, instead of meagre results following much labour, they anticipate the time when Pentecostal power shall again accompany the preaching of the Gospel, and sinners be converted, not by ones and twos, nor even by scores, but by thousands.

And is not all this very good, and greatly to be desired? Perhaps so. But was Pentecost *nothing more* than what is here described? Was there *nothing beyond* these four things that are now again so ardently longed for? Let us ascertain

WHAT PENTECOST REALLY WAS.

The important thing to notice about Pentecost is that it witnessed *the inauguration of an entirely new thing upon the earth.*

For hundreds of years God had been dealing with the nation of Israel. A law had been given and a covenant entered into with that people. Promises had been made, and the oracles of God had been committed to them. Prophets had been raised up from time to time, and a remnant had been brought back from captivity and were now dwelling again in their own land. In the midst of this remnant, the long-promised Messiah had appeared, not, as they expected, in pomp and martial glory, but in lowly guise. Their treatment of Him had been tragic. Instead of welcoming Him as their God-given Deliverer, they had handed Him over to the Roman authorities, who had crucified Him as a common felon.

That awful deed brought about an entire change in the ways of God with men. Israel's rejection of Christ was followed by God's rejection of Israel. Henceforth they were to be "*Lo-ammi*" (i.e. "not My people").

Yet not one word of His free and unconditional promises will fail. The day will yet come when Israel shall acclaim their once-crucified Messiah as "He that cometh in the name of Jehovah." They shall look upon Him whom they pierced, and mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son (Zech. xii. 10). *Then* God will resume His relationship with the chosen nation. Then again He will say,

“ It is My pēople,” and they shall say, “ The Lord is my God ” (Zech. XIII. 9).

Meanwhile, there is a great gap, marked by the suspension of God’s dealings with and through Israel. This great gap, extending already over nearly twenty centuries, was to be filled up with something new and altogether different from all that had gone before.

When the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth He referred to the coming change and to the new thing that was to be formed, consequent upon His rejection by Israel. Mark the exact words, recorded in Matthew XVI. 18 : “ *I will build My Church.*” It is not “ I have built,” nor even “ I am building,” but “ *I will build.*” Christ Himself would be the Builder, and the building should be peculiarly His own, *His Church, His assembly*, composed of *living* stones, believing men and women, who should be thus built together in one great structure.

Now the prime thought in connection with the day of Pentecost is that it was

THE BEGINNING OF THE BUILDING.

The experiences, the manifestations, the wonderful power of Pentecost were all secondary to *that*.

The Lord Jesus, having been raised up from among the dead, and exalted in glory, began to build that which should answer to the

description He Himself had given: "My Church." So He "shed forth" the Holy Spirit, and by this means also all that believed on Him were united to Himself, their risen Head, and to one another. They were baptized by that one Spirit into *one body* (1 Cor. XII. 13). No longer a mere number of individuals, they were indissolubly bound together by being indwelt by the one Spirit, and were thus constituted fellow-members of one body.

Never had such a thing entered the thoughts of the best and greatest of the saints of previous days. Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, Isaiah—all knew much of God and had enjoyed close communion with Him, but nothing of this kind had been revealed to them. It was something entirely fresh.

Unless we keep this great fact in the foreground, we shall utterly fail to comprehend the significance of Pentecost.

Another thing is to be noticed. In coming to form the Church, Christ's assembly, the Holy Ghost came, not as a visitor, but to remain. In Old Testament times He repeatedly wrought by special operation in chosen vessels. Thus He came upon, or (as the Hebrew word signifies) *clothed* Amasai (1 Chron. XII. 18) to make him the leader of a great movement in favour of David, God's anointed king. But in contrast to all this

He came at Pentecost to dwell. Not that He had ceased to work by special operations, and to employ chosen vessels, but what is characteristic of the period inaugurated at Pentecost is that the Holy Ghost *abides* here on earth, dwelling with and in believers, always and under all circumstances. This is a fulfilment of the promise in John xiv. 16 “ that He may abide with you *for ever.*”

Having thus far cleared the ground, let me put the question to the reader : Can a thing be commenced or inaugurated more than once ? And if the Holy Ghost came here to dwell and to abide, is it possible for Him to come again in the same way ?

Surely these questions admit of only one answer, a negative one. But these two things, the commencement of the new structure by Christ, and the coming of the Holy Spirit to take up His abode therein, were the prime events of Pentecost. All else was subsidiary and secondary.

An intelligent Christian, then, on listening to a fervent prayer for “ another Pentecost ” would exclaim : “ *Why, they are praying for the commencement of something that has already been commenced, and are asking for the coming of One who is already here !* ”

I shall be told, however, that this is not what is meant by those who pray in this way. What they desire is a renewal of the four

wonderful things mentioned at the opening of this paper. Let us, then, review them more in detail, and consider if we can rightly pray for and expect a renewal of them.

(1) THE WONDERFUL UNITY.

The oneness that prevailed amongst believers, as already noted, must have been a striking testimony to all outside. For a short period, that for which the Lord Jesus prayed, in John xvii., "that they all may be one," was actually to be seen. The "good and pleasant" thing of Psalm cxxxiii. had come to pass, for brethren were dwelling together in unity. "All that believed were together."

But the unity so manifest at Pentecost was more than a mere *outward* unity. Those who were Christ's were joined together in a unity that no power on earth or in hell could break. *And that unity has not ceased to exist.*

The clouds of trouble soon began to rise in the blue sky of those happy, early days. "There arose a murmuring" (Acts vi. 1). Dissension and strife began, disruption set in, and all through the history of the Church on earth it has been repeated again and again. Christians have fallen out with Christians. Servants of God have striven with their fellow-servants, and have parted asunder with bitter words. Divisions have multiplied, sects and

parties have risen, and the Church stands to-day a spectacle to the world ! *But the unity that was formed by the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost remains.* Believers are still fellow-members of one body ; still linked with one another and with Christ by never-to-be-broken bonds. The *one body* is as much a fact to-day as ever it was. Christians may call themselves by various names, and form themselves into parties with conflicting interests, nevertheless they are really and truly *one*, and the unity that exists between them, being divinely formed, can never be broken.

We shall do well to keep this great truth ever in view, and let it colour our thoughts. Let us bear it in mind when we pray. Let us remember it whenever we meet a fellow-Christian. Let it have a large place in our hearts. Let us avoid everything that is a practical denial of it.

In saying this, let no one suppose that I make light of outward and visible unity. The Lord prayed for a unity amongst His own that should lead the world to believe. This outward unity, alas, was lost in the early days of the Church's history, and Scripture holds out no hope of its being regained. Efforts to recover it have not been wanting. "The Reunion of Christendom" has for long been a favourite cry with some. Recent years have witnessed amalgamations between separ-

ated bodies of Presbyterians and of Methodists. Into such amalgamations, however, the spirit of the world largely enters ; finance and politics seem to hold a large place in the counsels that bring them to pass. The spiritually-minded Christian will attach little importance to such movements.

We are not to look, then, for any reconstitution of the Church on Pentecostal lines, or any recovery of the original, outward unity that marked it in those early days. We welcome any drawing together on the part of those whose hearts are loyal and true ; such should endeavour more and more to walk together, and “ follow righteousness, faith, love, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” Such a drawing together, on spiritual lines, apart from any organization or scheme of amalgamation, will possibly be seen, as the end draws nigh. But not in this direction lies

THE TRUE HOPE OF THE CHURCH.

If we study the later epistles, those that draw the dark picture of these closing days, we shall not fail to perceive the prominence that is given to *the coming of the Lord*.

I Timothy brings before us the apostasy of the “ latter times.” No prospect is held out of improvement or recovery, but Timothy is to “ flee these things.” He is to “ fight the

good fight of faith," and to keep the charge entrusted to him "*until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (vi. 14).

2 Timothy bears witness that "in the last days perilous times shall come." Not only in the world, but in the professing Church, "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse." In the midst of it all, the outlook set before the Christian is not a renewal of Pentecostal days, but the day of "His appearing," and "His heavenly kingdom" (iv. 8, 18).

2 Peter draws a picture of the days that were to come, that is dark indeed. "There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies." "Many shall follow their pernicious ways." "The way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (ii. 1, 2). Is there any likelihood of a revival of Pentecostal faith and power? No; we are exhorted to be "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God" (iii. 12).

1 John is no less emphatic in describing the growth of evil. Even in the apostle's day, "the last time," dark with apostasy, had set in. "Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time" (ii. 18). What then is the hope presented to our hearts? Not a return of the brightness of Pentecost, but the fact that "*He shall appear*" (ii. 28),

and that "when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (III. 2).

Jude speaks of "mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts." And in which direction is the Christian's heart to be set? Not backwards, but forwards. "Behold, the Lord cometh" (v. 14). "Ye, beloved, . . . looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (vv. 20, 21).

Is it not clear enough, then, that our watchword is to be, not "Back to Pentecost," but "ON TO GLORY"?

The letters to the Seven Churches in Asia confirm this. They sketch the course of the Church's history on earth, and the picture they present is one of increasing evil. But again and again *a prospect* is held out, to cheer and sustain the overcomer. What is this prospect? Not the return of bright, primitive days, but *the Lord's return*. "Hold fast till I come," is the word to Thyatira. "Behold, I come quickly," is the promise to Philadelphia.

Dear fellow-believer, look up and on. He who loves us is coming. Soon we shall hear the home call, we shall be caught up to meet our Lord in the air (1 Thess. iv. 17).

Why in the air? It is the seat of Satan's power (Eph. ii. 2). How fitting, then, that there, in the very teeth of the enemy, should

be the first demonstration of the coming triumph ! He who has scattered and divided the children of God, and has persecuted them and caused them to stumble, shall see them wearing the likeness of Christ, and all *one*, eternally *one*, in spite of all his efforts. What a victory !

“ No more to view Thy chosen few
In selfish strife divided ;
But drink in peace the living grace
That gave them hearts united.”

This, then, the coming of the Lord, is the true hope upon which our hearts are to be set.

(2) THE WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE.

In speaking of this, we must bear in mind that what took place on the day of Pentecost was not a mere experience, but a historical event. The Holy Ghost actually descended, and filled the house where they were and abode in or upon the disciples.

A remarkable prophecy by Joel may here be referred to (II. 28). It was foretold that God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, and that many should prophesy, and see visions.

To this prophecy Peter refers in his Pentecostal discourse, to show that what the people beheld was not due to new wine, but the result of the Spirit being shed forth. With

the prophecy of Joel before them they should have perceived the true character of this great wonder.

But we shall make a serious mistake if we imagine that Joel's prophecy found its final fulfilment on the day of Pentecost, or that its accomplishment belongs to Christianity at all.

It is stated in Joel II. that a day is coming when the Lord will do great things for the land and people of Israel. He Himself will be in their midst. The years of their sorrow and suffering will be over, and they shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord. It is *after all this* (see v. 28) that the Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh, and the accompanying signs will be manifested.

To clearly understand this will save us from disappointment. We shall see that if a full accomplishment of this prophecy was not witnessed even at Pentecost, much less is it to be looked for in our day. Its true place belongs to the "afterward." When the Church has been taken to glory, and God's dealings with Israel resumed, the ushering in of the millennial kingdom will be attended by the outpouring of the Spirit in this large way. In that day, not in this, will it take place.

But, meanwhile, may not Christians expect to be filled with the Spirit? Should we not

pray that the Holy Ghost may thus fill us, according to Ephesians v. 18?

Most decidedly. If we may not expect the world-wide outpouring that will take place in another age, we may each one seek to be personally filled with that same blessed Spirit.

Here let me utter a word of caution. It is important to be clear as to the *motives* that actuate us in seeking to be thus filled. Is it in order that *we* may be wonderful people, or perform wonderful exploits? It is a matter of common observation that

SELF-OCCUPATION

is often characteristic of those whose voices are most frequently heard in connection with this subject. Their prayers, their testimonies, their thoughts seem all to revolve around themselves.

Now the result of being *really* filled with the Spirit is the very opposite. Self is forgotten, and Christ fills the vision of the soul. Observe how this makes itself evident in Peter's case on the day of Pentecost.

The occasion of his address was the necessity of explaining to the multitude the nature of what had happened. But he seizes the opportunity to speak of what is uppermost in his heart—Christ. Verses 14 to 21 are taken up with the preliminary explanation. From verse 22 onward, we have Peter's gospel

address, the first of the kind ever given. Its theme and topic is not Pentecost, not the Church, not even the Holy Spirit, but JESUS. Pick up the thread of the discourse and it runs thus : “ Jesus . . . crucified . . . raised up . . . exalted . . . made both Lord and Christ.”

That is what marks a Spirit-filled man. When he opens his lips it is not to testify of himself, or his wonderful experiences, but to speak of Christ. The flesh loves to speak of “ I,” “ me,” and “ my.” The Spirit gives prominence to *Him*.

(3) THE WONDERFUL MANIFESTATIONS.

“ Speaking with tongues ” is, without doubt, a manifestation of supernatural power. This gift seems to have been much coveted even in New Testament days. The Corinthian Christians laid undue stress upon their possession of this, and similar gifts, and the tendency has more than once recurred in the history of the Church. At the present time the subject is occupying the minds of many, and word has come from Sunderland, Rochester (U.S.A.), Sweden, and other places of some who profess to “ speak with tongues,” and who expect before long to be able to work miracles, and even to raise the dead.

On examination of these pretensions, their counterfeit character readily appears. It is

surprising that Christians should be misled by such proceedings. But let us see what we can gather from the Scriptures as to "speaking with tongues."

In 1 Corinthians XII. instruction is given as to the exercise of "spiritual gifts." These exhibit great diversity, and take various forms. Verses 8 to 10 mention some of them. "The word of wisdom" heads the list, then "the word of knowledge," "faith," and so on. Near the end of the list "tongues" are mentioned, not only the "divers kinds," but the "*interpretation*." This is important to notice. The tongues were capable of interpretation, and could only serve a useful purpose when interpreted.

The point to observe, however, is that all these things were manifestations of *the same* Spirit, all part of His great plan, and not to be separated in their use from the other gifts.

At the close of the chapter "diversities of tongues" are again referred to, and the Apostle asks: "Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?" Notice again the mention of the *interpreting*.

Chapter XIII. shows the "more excellent way," and speaks of something better than the possession of miraculous powers. For one may be like sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal, though able to speak with the tongues of men and of angels. "Tongues" are

amongst the things that have their day, and vanish. "They shall cease" (v. 8).

Chapter XIV. returns to the subject of "spiritual gifts," and begins by drawing a contrast between prophesying and speaking with tongues. Prophesying led to edification, speaking with tongues did not. He that prophesied (spoke to edification) was, therefore, greater than he that spoke with tongues. Tongues were for *a sign* to unbelievers (v. 22). Prophesying was for the help and comfort of believers.

From all this it may be gathered that "speaking with tongues" was no unusual thing in those early times, especially among the Christians at Corinth. It is evident, also, that this gift was one of those given by God as signs to the unbelieving world. This was His way of calling attention to what He was doing in the inauguration and establishment of Christianity.

Miracles, gifts of healing, tongues, were thus intended to serve very much the same purpose that church bells do, namely, to call attention to that which is going on, or about to begin. When the service starts, the bells cease to ring. And when Christianity was fairly started on its way, the sign-gifts ceased.

But the edification - gifts continue. In Ephesians IV. 11-13 these are mentioned, and it is stated that they will go on "till we

all come . . . unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Speaking with tongues has no place in this list. Apostles are mentioned first, and prophets. These, it is true, belong to the foundation, or beginning (Eph. II. 20), but "evangelists," "pastors" and "teachers" are the gifts that always serve "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry."

The tendency of the human heart is to set the highest value on what brings *self* into prominence. This the sign-gifts did, more or less. Hence the glorying of the Corinthians in their ability to speak with tongues. But the Apostle, writing by the inspiration of the Spirit of God, seeks to correct this tendency, and lays stress on the less showy, but more useful gifts that promote edification and spiritual growth. The case of the Corinthians proved that it was possible for "speaking with tongues" to exist side by side with a loose, worldly and doctrinally unsound state.

May it be ours to set most store by that which is commended by the Spirit as of greater value than sign-gifts, whether "tongues" or anything else. Is it not clear that it would not be for the blessing of the people of God if "speaking with tongues" were renewed, either of the kind given at Pentecost, or the kind spoken of in Corinthians? Such sign-gifts, if bestowed to-day, would be no proof

of the love and care of Christ for His Church. Rather would it be a seal of divine approval upon the confusion, the divisions, the worldliness, the unsound doctrine, the carnal methods that are so prevalent.

This being so, instead of looking for a return of "tongues" and "miracles" the spiritually-minded believer will pray for an increase of the things that tend more directly to edification. Let us in every way seek the true blessing of our fellow-Christians, but let us not delude ourselves and them with the idea that sign-gifts are to be looked for again in these last and evil days.

(4) THE WONDERFUL POWER.

Three thousand souls added in one day ! Truly a proof of marvellous power. Shall we ever hear of such a thing again ? What toiling and agonizing there often is to-day without any apparent result at all !

But the Holy Ghost is still here ! His power is as great as ever. If the Prophets' day was "a day of small things," *this* is the day of a great Person. Why, then, do we not see the blessing that was seen at Pentecost ?

There is one important respect in which the Holy Ghost's presence on the day of Pentecost differs from His presence on the earth to-day. *Then* His presence was known

and His operations were carried on mainly in one city alone. *Now* His presence is in every place where Christians are to be found, and His operations are practically world-wide.

Bearing this great difference in mind, consider whether it is not likely that there are *many* days when the numbers of Pentecost are surpassed. Take last Sunday, for instance. Think of the thousands of places where the Gospel was faithfully preached. Think of the great cities, the country towns, the scattered villages. Think of England, with a host of preachers proclaiming the good news far and wide. Think of Wales and Scotland. Think of the hundreds who stood up to preach Christ even in priest-ridden Ireland. Think of the Continent of Europe, with its devoted evangelists. Think of what was done amongst the eighty millions of the United States, and in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa. Think last, but by no means least, of the multitudes of God's servants who are holding forth the word of life amongst the heathen. Think of the mission fields of India, of China, of Japan, of Korea, of Africa, of Madagascar, of South America, of the far-off islands of the South. Let your mind travel all over the great harvest-field, make allowance for the blinding influence of Satan and the hardness of men's hearts, and say: Is it

not more than probable that at least three thousand were added to the Lord last Sunday ?

There is certainly no cause for discouragement. Great, indeed, are the triumphs which the Gospel has won in these days. It is still the power of God unto salvation. God has wrought and is working mightily amongst the heathen. From all parts comes the story of widespread blessing ; multitudes turning to God from their idols, and finding joy and peace in believing.

At the same time there were never so many heathen in the world as there are to-day. Never did the world look less like being converted than just now. But the Bible does not lead us to expect that the world will ever be converted through the preaching of the Gospel, or the efforts of missionaries. On the contrary, God has been, and is, visiting the nations " to take out of them a people for His name " (Acts xv. 14).

Instead of turning to Christ, the world will turn to Antichrist. Nothing but the overwhelming judgment of God, and the removal of all things that offend, will make the world the abode of righteousness and peace.

Meanwhile, there are

FOUR OTHER WONDERFUL THINGS

spoken of in Acts II. in which we Christians should earnestly seek to continue. At the

close of a paper of this length, we cannot do much more than mention them.

- (1) The Apostles' doctrine.
- (2) The Apostles' fellowship.
- (3) Breaking of bread.
- (4) Prayers.

It becomes us increasingly to take heed to the Apostles' doctrine. Evil doctrine abounds, and even Christians sanction it by their presence in the places where it is taught, and by their remaining in church-association with those who teach it. We have the Apostles' doctrine in the inspired epistles which they wrote.

The Apostles' fellowship is that to which all Christians belonged. Other circles of "fellowship" have been formed since then, claiming the allegiance of saints. It will be our wisdom, in view of these conflicting circles, while sincerely loving all the true children of God who are in them, to cleave to the Apostles' fellowship, based as it is upon their doctrine, and broad enough to include "all saints," everywhere.

The breaking of bread is a privilege of which we can avail ourselves even in days like these. It will continue till the Lord comes (1 Cor. xi. 26). Alas, that any Christians should make light of it! Yet many, who are active enough

with their propaganda, and have their societies, guilds, leagues, bands, etc., seem to care but little for the request of their Lord and Master : “ This do in remembrance of Me.” May He make the privilege dearer to our hearts !

Lastly, there was steadfast continuing in prayers. How much we need to give ourselves to this ! Never was there a day when prayer was so urgently called for. Besides praying in secret, let us seek others like-minded to pray with. In this way we shall learn the secret of having power with God. We shall learn His mind for His people in these dark and difficult days. And instead of being misled by delusive hopes, and occupied with things which are not according to His will, we shall be kept moving along in the path of His pleasure, and shall have the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and of the Scriptures.

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