

Why I Left The Pentecostal Church

by Mike Cornwell

Paul could have been thinking of one like me when he wrote (2 Tim. 3:13, 14) to a young man named Timothy. I was born into a Pentecostal family of many years. My grandfather preached "fire and brimstone" from the time I could remember until his death in November, 1968, while I was serving in Viet Nam.

He was a somewhat intimidating individual who was demanding and abrupt. I was taught early on that only those who were "chosen" or "divinely called" could ever enter into the "faithful" ministry of our Lord. I never challenged his thinking nor his preaching. What he said was like a direct communication from Jesus Christ himself. With this in mind, at the age of 12, I was told I was being called into the ministry and preached my first sermon shortly thereafter.

To this day, my family fully believes that if one is not in the "Lord's church" that meaning, saved, baptized in Jesus' Name, and filled with the "Holy Ghost" with the evidence of "speaking in tongues" ... one is not a Christian and destined for a "Devil's Hell." My step-father has preached this in excess of 50 years; my brother-in-law and sister "pastor" a very large Pentecostal church in the Cincinnati, Ohio area. I have two cousins who are also Pentecostal preachers. I have been accused of being "in a den of thieves and a pit of vipers" by my family because of my stand on the Word of God and my faithfulness to the Lord's church. My wife and I have been publicly chastised and the atmosphere is very tense when we are visiting with my family.

We are reminded regularly of Acts 3:12... "Yea and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." It was October, 1984, at the age of 42 that I realized that all I had been preaching for 18 years as a Pentecostal preacher had been "false doctrine" and that I was like the "blind leading the blind." That first Thursday night of October, 1984, changed my life, my thinking and my understanding of the "Word of God." I was invited to a "Gospel Meeting" by a caring friend in Little Rock, Arkansas. I had never been to a Lord's church in my life. Chris Bullock of Kansas City, Missouri was the evangelist that week. I consented to go with the attitude that I would be able to "shed some light" on his teaching and thus convince others of their wrong. Something happened... what was being preached was what I secretly believed in my heart all my adult life. One did not have to come to an "altar," cry out for mercy to receive forgiveness... one did not have to come again to the "altar" to "seek for the infilling of the Holy Ghost," one did not have to "utter" confusion in an attempt to have the "evidence of speaking in tongues."

All one had to do was hear the word of truth, believe it with one's heart, confess Christ as the Son of God, repent of his sins, and be baptized into the body of Christ for the remission of sins. The Lord then not only forgives but adds you to the church he died for. *This I did in obedience that following Sunday evening...* I became a "born again" Christian. I gave up music, even my future dreams, to follow Jesus for the first time in my life... on the right path.

It was not until October, 1987, that I attended for the first time a "faithful" congregation of The Lord's church. I met Louis Sharp of Little Rock, Arkansas and I then began to realize what

"faithfulness" really meant. As we began to study, I began to learn, I began to realize that the Lord had work for me to do just as every other Christian. I then began to teach and preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It has now become my life's work. My desire is to teach those who are in error... the truth... that they might become part of this body of Christ.

Let me tell you "Why I Left the Pentecostal church." Pentecostalism traces itself back no further than New Year's Eve, 1899, in Topeka, Kansas. The Lord's church dates back to 33 AD when twelve disciples received the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4). This was a result of the fulfillment of the promise Jesus gave to eleven disciples (Acts 1:8), Matthias being added later (Acts 1:26). Pentecostalism teaches that the "power of the Holy Spirit" fell first on the 120 gathered in the upper room. Pentecostalism cannot show any Biblical authority for its existence.

Pentecostalism believes that this power was received by a "new revelation of God." The Bible teaches no such thing (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). The scripture holds that man needs to know this for his salvation... there is no new revelation. The Pentecostal church teaches that in 1914, another revelation was received revealing that being baptized in "Jesus Name" became tenets of faith (law)... a formula. This is not what the Bible teaches (Matt. 28:19, 20). We find in the early half of this century, several Pentecostal groups were established... Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ, Inc. and the Pentecostal Church, Inc. In 1944, these two bodies became known as the United Pentecostal Church (Pentecostal Church Manual, pp 8-10, Forward). The Bible teaches that the Lord established only one church (Matt. 16:18). This is the only church that Christ ever spoke of.

What are some of the Pentecostal practices? They claim that through the instrument of the "Holy Spirit" miracles of healing incurable diseases occurs daily. (I have never seen anyone miraculously healed in all the years I was Pentecostal). I will not limit God, He has the power if he so chooses. Man does not have that power. If he does, where is his proof? Why does the Holy Spirit give to one man this power and not another? That is unscriptural. Only the disciples and those they laid hands on had this power. They are all dead.

Pentecostalism teaches that a person may speak in "tongues" while under the influence of the "Holy Spirit" just like Peter and the other apostles at Pentecost. The only others who were able to do this were Cornelius and his kinfolk (Acts 10:44-46) and those who the apostles laid their hands on. Don't we all have the continued influence of the Holy Spirit through the Word? Can any of us speak in an "unlearned" tongue?

Pentecostalism espouses religion as a "romantic" philosophy that the heart of man has reasons which his mind knows nothing of. Man's feelings are the highest authority. The Bible is truth (John 17:17) and the truth is not subjective, it does not originate with a person's own thinking. Religion is not based on a "feel good" experience.

The Bible must be studied to be obeyed (2 Tim. 2:15; John 8:32) and it is the absolute, inspired and authoritative Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21). When man regards his feelings as the basic authority, he is on the downward path. To reject the Word of God and do "that which is right in our own eyes" is to reject God (1 Sam. 15:22-26; Matt. 7:13, 14).

Pentecostalism believes and teaches that women may participate in leading in prayer. One only has to turn to 1 Timothy 2:8-15 to refute this. Women are to learn in silence (1 Cor. 14:34), they are not to teach in any capacity over a man. Women may however teach younger women (Tit. 2:4) and they may teach a man in private (Acts 18:25). Women may not teach, deliver discourses and are forbidden to preach in mixed public (1 Cor. 14:34).

Pentecostalism teaches that instruments of music are used to "glorify" God in worship. True worship is according to "Spirit and Truth" (John 4:24). The word of Christ, not Moses, not our feelings, not what we believe to be right will judge us in the last day (John 12:48). Vocal music was repeatedly specified as the kind of worship God wants from Christians (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19).

Christians are to abide in the teachings of Christ, not man (2 John 9, 10). We are to follow the pattern given by God (Heb. 8:5) without adding, subtracting or altering to our own desires or opinions.

I had read the Bible all my life. I preached what I had been taught. When I doubted, I was always told of "new revelations" received from God. In the Pentecostal church one is taught that the "Pastor" is the authority within the church and only knowledge is gained by adherence to "God's man" and in the leading of the "Holy Spirit" directly. Accept that which you doubt with your faith.

Only until I realized that in order to understand the "Gospel" one must study with an open heart prepared to accept the truth of the "Gospel" and with this truth obey the Word of God. The Bible really is a simple book to understand, but, when man attempts to add to it - his opinion, his feelings
- he begins to lose the truth and believe a lie.

I learned to trust His word completely. I learned to obey it totally for it contains all that man needs to get his soul into eternity with Jesus Christ.