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AZUSA STREET SERIES

How Pentecost Came to Los Angeles

*The Story behind the
Azusa Street Revival*



FRANK BARTLEMAN

SPIRIT-
EMPOWERED
CLASSICS

INTRODUCTION BY CECIL M. ROBECK JR.

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CHAPTER 1



Trials and Blessings. Revival Begins

The author of the following pages arrived in Los Angeles, Calif., with wife and two daughters, the oldest three and one-half years old, Dec. 22, 1904, after two years' mission work in the north, having crossed the continent previously, by easy stages. (See, "From Plough to Pulpit," price 50c, for previous experiences.)

After stopping one night at Peniel Mission, 227 S. Main St., we rented two unfurnished rooms, upstairs, without heat, of friends at 1055 Temple St. I had little money. I secured some furniture, and we cooked and ate under a tent in the yard. Being cold and rainy, we suffered much. Our youngest child became sick, but God spared her. The harvest was great but the laborers few in those days; there was plenty of mission work all around us, but the question was how were our needs to be supplied.

I started a street meeting, but an officer promptly stopped me. I had no permit, so went to work with the regular missions. Every night found me taking part in services, and my days were spent in personal work. We lived by faith, having no income. I had served the Lord largely on that line since my conversion

in 1893, having been called to preach soon after. Wife was one with me.

Dec. 31, we had received but 50 cents since coming to Los Angeles. We were stranded. My health had been poor, from a child. I wrote in my diary at that time: My health is quite poor, but I believe I shall live to finish my work. Few care to go into the hard places, but my work is to go where others will not go. It seems God can only get a man who has nothing but Heaven to live for to do the work for which a strong man is needed. I am glad to be used up in His service. I would rather wear out than rust out; and rather starve for God, if need be, than fatten for the devil." That was about the spirit of my consecration.

January 2, I testified and helped in an all-day meeting at Boyle Heights M. E. Church, walking there, not having car-fare. Being very tired I asked the Lord for my car-fare home, and found a nickel on the side-walk. I rode home.

I preached at Fifth Street Mission, where the "Burning Bush" had gotten control. God preciousely anointed me as I exhorted to a middle-ground between formalism and fanaticism. They were going wild. Jesus was crucified "between two thieves." The devil splits a work in the middle, runs away with the heart, leaving the shell, thus driving the saints to both extremes, and destroys the whole. We are creatures of extremes.

Little Esther, our oldest child, was seized with convulsions, and passed away to be with Jesus January 7, at 4 A.M. She had been a great sufferer all her life, being very frail from birth. This time it seemed God's will to take her. I was constrained to pray that she might be spared from so much suffering. I felt I was holding her by my prayers and prolonging her suffering. God wanted her but would not tear her from me. He made me willing to give her up, and then he took her. She soon passed

into the glory world without further struggle. I had kissed her that morning for the last time in consciousness, little realizing it would be the last. Our little ones slip away from us so easily. Let us make the most of them while we have them with us. Deal gently with the children. Life is hard enough for them at best, and we may regret their loss when too late. This is a tremendous universe for the child spirit, and filled with terribly evil forces. We must protect and help them all we can. Wife plead with the unsaved woman in the house to get right with God as little Esther's spirit was departing, so great was the grace given her. We had fondly hoped our little family might never be broken into by death. But He knew best.

I copy the following from my diary, written at this time: "Little Esther slipped away from us early this morning, to be with Jesus. The angels called her, and she went to meet them. They carried her off and left us lonely hearted. Oh, what a void her absence leaves with us! But we sorrow not as those who have no hope. She is safe forevermore. Saved from an unfriendly world and a life of suffering. She was too frail for the long journey of life in this world, and so He spared her. She was as innocent of evil as any one could be. The great ordeal of life is past for her. She has gone on before, ahead of us, saved from the sorrow of parting. She has escaped safely, while we must struggle on. Her work is finished in the cool of the early morning of life, and she has gone home, spared the heat of the journey. The angels will care for her far better than we could, and she will be inconceivably happier. For her own sake I would not recall her if I could. So we lay her body away in the full assurance of a glorious resurrection. Some day her glorified spirit, all radiant and rapturous with the blissful joy of Heaven, will meet us at the 'beautiful gate.' We trust it will not be long."

Little Esther was a veritable “morning glory.” It was the flower she loved. I placed one tenderly on her bosom, as she lay in the coffin, ready for burial. But she had gone “where God and the angels are,” never to grow “world-weary.” We were glad she ever came to us, though she stayed but a little while, and broke our hearts at parting. There is one more soul in Heaven. Should we be called also, before Jesus comes, we will sorrow only for those we must leave behind. We will joy for all those gone before. We only miss our loved ones here. Could we but catch one strain of Heaven’s pure melody it would spoil us for earthly sounds forever. Could we but catch one glimpse of departed loved ones, through the “gates ajar,” earth could no longer hold us here. We must see things from the Heaven side. Earth’s sounds and spirits are so crude and cruel. Heaven is all love, and joy, and peace, and rest. Thank God! Sorrow and parting, there, will never more be known. No more empty chairs, nor graves nor coffins, there.

Sister Frambes, M. E. pastor’s wife at Lamanda Park, California, gave me the following true story at this time. The incident occurred over half a century ago in a suburb of Columbus, Ohio. Old Auntie Mellinger, a wonderful saint, and eye witness, related it many times to Sister Frambes. A poor and obscure family had a little daughter ten years of age. The child had always been precocious in the things of God, and now lay at the point of death. Auntie Mellinger, with others, had gathered to watch her pass away. Soon the child spoke in rapt attention: “Listen! Listen!” They could as yet hear I nothing. The child’s ears had already been quickened beyond earthly hearing. Soon, however, they also began to hear the most entrancing strains of music, manifestly not of this world, coming from the distance. It rapidly approached, becoming more audible, until

it finally ceased for a time just over the house where they were gathered. The child's face lit up with a very halo of glory, and as the presence of God filled the room they realized that a band of heavenly beings encompassed them, and as they seemed almost to hear the rustle of angels' wings, the spirit of the little one passed out of its temple of clay, in a rapture of transcending joy. The heavenly music was again resumed, and soon died away in the distance. The angel band had gone back to the Celestial City, and the spirit of the little one had departed with them. "Come, angel band, come and around me stand! Oh, bear me away on your snowy wings, to my immortal home."

From John Wesley's diary we gather the following, under date of March 29, 1782: "Being Good Friday, I came to Mansfield to assist in the services of the day. While we were administering the sacrament to about thirteen hundred people I heard a low, soft, solemn sound, just like that of an aeolian harp. It continued five or six minutes, and so affected many that they could not refrain from tears. It then gradually died away." Evidently the angel choir, joining in the services.

Sister Ferguson came from Peniel Mission to comfort us, the next day after Esther's death, but was forced to exclaim as she entered the room, "Why the Comforter is here!" We had no money for the funeral, but Brother Geo. Studd secured a cheap lot from the City for us, in Evergreen Cemetery, among the children's plots. She lies buried among the foreign children. And so she is a little missionary still, as she was in life.

I carried the coffin, that contained all that remained on earth of our little darling, on my knees in the carriage. It was raining too hard for wife to go to the cemetery. And so we laid her away on a dark and stormy day, to await the resurrection morn, where there will be no clouds nor sorrow. How pure that

morning air will be! And how glorious our loved ones then! And how all creation will sing, as the Sun of Righteousness appears, with healing in His wings! We had no hearse or regular funeral. But God provided, even as He had in life.

Our little “Queen Esther” seemed to have been born “for such a time as this.”—(Esther 4-14.) Beside that little coffin, with heart bleeding, I pledged my life anew for God’s service. In the presence of death how real eternal issues become. I promised the rest of my life should be spent wholly for Him. He made a fresh covenant with me. I then begged Him to open a door of service quickly, that I might not find time for sorrow.

Just one week after little Esther’s departure I began preaching twice a day at the little Peniel Mission in Pasadena. The devil fought hard. He must have sensed what was coming. At times while preaching a hot blast from the “pit” seemed to strike me. More than once I almost fainted, and had to rally my strength before I could proceed. I preached noon and night for almost a month here. One night we had a season of great quietness at the altar for almost an hour. The Lord drew very near. We were stilled before Him. It is good to get quiet. We talk too much. He speaks in the “still, small voice,” when we are quiet. Our spirits are too restless. We cannot hear Him. He does not shout and enter into turmoil.

We soon had a breaking up time at the mission. Souls began to weep their way to Calvary. One day while on the way to Pasadena the devil tried to electrocute the motorman. The trolley also jumped the wire a dozen times, and it seemed we would never get there. I had a message burning in my soul, and prayed hard. We finally arrived, just in time for me to deliver the message in the meeting. We had a great victory. But the devil had done all he could to hinder.

We had powerful meetings, with wonderful altar services. The Spirit wrought mightily. February 6, I brought wife and little Ruth to Pasadena, to the mission home. The fight was on. An enemy tried to persuade the Fergusons in Los Angeles to stop the meetings. But God put him to bed with the grippe. I determined not to eat or sleep again until victory came, so I fasted and prayed all one day. That night the Lord broke forth in power. He could not afford to have me die on His hands. I could not preach for the presence of God. The glory played on my face like a hot sun bath. God spoke that night. The altar was full until after midnight with earnest seekers.

My work here seemed finished for the time, so I rented two unfurnished rooms at 213 Grove Street, Pasadena for five dollars per month, and moved my family there, bringing our furniture from Los Angeles. I was very tired and worn in body. My nerves had been worn threadbare from years of previous pioneer mission work in various parts of the country. We had always worked on faith lines, having taken for our motto Isa. 33-16- "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." We had no money and so it seemed necessary for me to find employment for a season. At that time I had not yet turned my back fully on secular employment, as He led me so clearly to do later, although I had already been preaching for more than ten years.

While souls had been saved during the month's meetings in Peniel Mission, yet the greatest victory gained was the digging out of a company of young men attending there. A number were called out by the Lord for future service. Principal among these were Edward Boehmer, Amil Allen and Orville Tingle. Two of these at least have become very active in the Pentecostal work of today. Sister Mamie Craybill took an active part also in these meetings, especially in the ministry of intercession.

She was a very choice vessel of the Lord, later becoming active in the Pentecostal work also.

In much weakness of body I secured work gardening. This provided us with food. I preached frequently on the streets, and helped in the mission. My next job was picking oranges, from a ladder, but I had to quit at noon the first day. The weight of the fruit and the twisting on the ladder nearly broke my back. That was my weak spot. I got more gardening, and fence building. This was not so hard. Almost every night found me in some meeting, preaching or testifying. It was my life. My first call was to preach.

We suffered much from the cold and rain as we had only a little gas burner in the house, both for heating and cooking. Little Ruth was taken sick with fever, and we were about out of food. Work was scarce. I preached at Peniel Mission, without mentioning our need, but declared my faith in God to stand by the man who would stand by Him. They prayed for Ruth's healing and the Lord touched her at home while we prayed. A brother handed me five dollars after the service. Thus God had stood by me.

I distributed many tracts in Los Angeles, among the harlots and the saloons. My spare time was all spent in tract and personal work, or preaching on the street and in the missions. I only rested when I slept, and then I was often praying. I was greatly burdened for souls. "There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee." (Isa. 64:7.)

Brother Allen, one of the mission boys, gave me work painting. He was a contractor. I worked for some time at this. One day the devil tried to kill me. I was painting the gable end of a barn, from a ladder, which stood on a slanting shed roof. Suddenly, without warning, the ladder slipped and fell.

But I landed squarely on my feet on the roof, well balanced. It was done too quickly to realize it. My paint spilled all over the roof. Ps. 91:11, 12, immediately came to me. The angels of the Lord had “borne me up.” I could have rolled off the roof and broken my neck.

April 8, I heard F. B. Myer, from London, preach. He described the great revival then going on in Wales, which he had just visited. He had met Evan Roberts. My soul was stirred to its depths, having read of this revival shortly before. I then and there promised God He should have full right of way with me, if He could use me.

Mother Wheaton, the prison evangelist, came to Pasadena and preached in Peniel. She was on fire for God. I longed to be wholly engaged in the work of the Lord once more but knew not how my family should be supported. The obstacles seemed very great, and my strength small. But the call of God was upon me. My family belonged to Him. If He called me I dared not fail.

I distributed tracts in the post office, banks, and public buildings in Los Angeles, and also visited many saloons with tracts. Later I visited about thirty saloons in Los Angeles again. The houses of prostitution were wide open at that time and I gave out many tracts there.

Little Esther’s death had broken my heart and I felt I could only live while in God’s service. I longed to know Him in a more real way and to see the work of God go forth in power. A great burden and cry came in my heart for a mighty revival. He was preparing me for a fresh service for Him. This could only be brought about by the realization of a deeper need in my own heart for God, and a real soul travail for the work of God. This He gave me. Many were being similarly prepared

at this time in different parts of the world. The Lord was preparing to visit and deliver his people once more. Intercessors were the need. "He wondered that there was no intercessor." —Isa. 59:16. "I sought for a man to stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none." —Ezek. 22:30.

About the first of May a powerful revival broke out in the Lake Avenue M. E. Church in Pasadena. The young men who had been dug out in the meetings in Peniel Mission most of them attended this church. They had gotten under the burden for a revival there. In fact we had been praying for a sweeping revival for Pasadena. God was answering our prayers. I found a wonderful work of the Spirit going on at Lake Avenue. The altar was full of seeking souls. There was no big preacher there. One night nearly every unsaved soul in the house got saved. It was a clean sweep for God. Conviction was mightily upon the people. In two weeks' time two hundred souls knelt at the altar, seeking the Lord. The Peniel boys were underneath, and wonderfully used of God. We then began to pray for an out-pouring of the Spirit for Los Angeles and the whole of Southern California.

I find the following observations in my diary, written at that time: "Some Holiness churches (foremost at that time) are going to be surprised to find God passing them by. He will work in channels where they will yield to him. They must humble themselves for Him to come. We are crying, 'Pasadena for God!' The people are too well satisfied with their own goodness. They have little faith or interest for the salvation of others. God will humble them by passing them by. The Spirit is breathing prayer through us for a mighty, general outpouring. Great things are coming. We are asking largely, that our joy may be full. God is

moving. We are praying for the churches and their pastors. The Lord will visit those willing to yield to Him.”

And the same is true today of the Pentecostal people. Their ultimate failure or success for God will be realized just at this point. We must keep humble and little in our own eyes. Let us get built up by a sense of our own importance and we are gone. History repeats itself in this connection. God has always sought a humble people. He can use no other. Martin Luther, the great reformer, wrote: “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ says repent, he means that the whole life of believers on earth should be a constant and perpetual repentance. Repentance and sorrow—i.e. true repentance—endure as long as a man is displeased with himself—that is, until he passes from this life into eternity. The desire of self-justification is the cause of all the distresses of the heart.” There is much need always of heart preparation, in humility and separation, before God can consistently come. **The depth of any revival will be determined exactly by the spirit of repentance that obtains.** In fact this is the key to every true revival born of God.

May 12, God dealt with me about giving all my time to Him, turning my back finally and for all time on secular employment. He wanted me now to trust Him fully for myself and family. I had just received a little book, “The Great Revival in Wales,” written by S. B. Shaw. Taking a little walk before breakfast I was reading this. The Lord had been trying for years to bring me to this decision for his service. We entered into a new contract between us. He was to have the rest of my life fully. And I have never dared to break this contract. I love work, and have been terribly tempted at times, through seeming need. I have always worked harder than my natural strength reasonably allowed.

Wife kept my breakfast for me. But I did not return until noon. I had lost my appetite for food. The Spirit, through the little book, set me on fire. I visited and prayed with three preachers and a number of workers before I returned home, at noon. I had received a new commission and anointing. My burden was for a revival. A brother gave me the money for a new pair of shoes I needed. Thus already the Lord was providing. The devil was tempting me about my contract. I had had no work for three weeks. God had closed the door to work against me.

I visited and prayed with people all day long for some time now, distributing G. Campbell Morgan's pamphlet on the "Revival in Wales." It moved the people strongly. The spirit of prayer was increasing upon me and I determined to be "obedient to the heavenly vision." The "bread question" had faced me down for many years. I prayed the Lord for faith to trust Him fully. "Man shall not live by bread alone." —Matt. 4:4.

The Lord blessed me with a further spirit of exhortation to revival among the churches, giving me articles to write for the Holiness press along the same line also. I began to write particularly for the "Way of Faith" and "God's Revivalist." One night I awoke from my sleep shouting the praises of God. He was getting hold of me more and more. I was now going day and night, exhorting to faith in God for mighty things. The spirit of revival consumed me. The spirit of prophecy came upon me strongly, also. I seemed to receive a definite "gift of faith" for revival. We were evidently in the beginning of wonderful days to come, and I prophesied continually of a mighty outpouring.

I had a real ministry to the religious press, and began to attend prayer meetings at the various churches, to exhort them. We were up against it for money, and the devil tempted me to go back to work. Our rent was due, and I had only 50 cents. But

the Lord heard prayer. I was about to sell our stove. We had to have a roof over our heads. Just the exact amount we needed came in, without solicitation. God was faithful.

G. Campbell Morgan's little tract on the "Revival in Wales" spread the fire in the churches wonderfully. I did a great deal of visiting among the saints also, and began to sell S. B. Shaw's little book, "The Great Revival in Wales," among the churches. God wonderfully used it to promote faith for a revival spirit. My tract work was continued among the saloons and business houses.

My clothing by this time was getting quite shabby. In answer to prayer the Lord gave me, through Brother Marsh, a Methodist brother in Pasadena, two second-hand suits of clothes, one light and one heavy, for summer and winter. Both were better than the one I was wearing. So I got a double blessing, twice what I had asked for.

I preached in the M. E. Church at Lamanda Park. Four souls were saved, and others under conviction. One ran out of the meeting to keep from yielding to God. I began to visit more churches, and write more messages for the religious press. The Lord frequently allowed us to be strongly tested financially, but never to make our wants known to the people. We had only a handful of beans in the house on one occasion. But He provided before they were fully consumed. A brother brought us a sack of potatoes as the result of a testimony I gave in the First M. E. Church. It pays to obey God. I preached at Lamanda Park M. E. Church again and the meeting lasted until after midnight. The fire fell. We repaired to the parsonage and were in prayer until near morning.

I owed the landlady for one week's rent. The devil got in her and she ordered me to pay at once, or get out. But God sent

the rent. At Lamanda Park I preached a number of times again. The fire fell in a wonderful way. A number of souls were saved. Brother and Sister Frambes, the pastors, were precious children of God. God also began to work at Brother Manley's tent meeting in Pasadena. The burden of prayer was heavy on me for the work in those days. I had little rest day or night, in services and prayer. They were initial days. The fight was on. Both God and the devil were on the move.

May, 1905, I wrote in an article: "My soul is on fire as I read of the glorious work of grace in Wales. The 'seven thousand' in the land, who have kept company with the 'spared ones' (Ezek. 9), and who have been 'crying and sighing' because of the abomination and desolation in the land, the decay of vital piety in the body of Christ, may well be excused for rejoicing at such a time and prospect as this, when God is once more moving in the earth. But where are the men who will 'stir themselves up to take hold on God?' Let our watchword at this time be 'California for Christ.' God is looking for workers, channels, worms of the dust. Remember, He must have worms. Jesus' life was pressed out in prayer at every pore. This kind comes too high for most people. But may not this be our Lord's 'last call?'"

Cecil M. Robeck Jr., PhD, is an ordained Assemblies of God minister who has served on the administration and faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary for over forty years. He is currently senior professor of Church History and Ecumenics and special assistant to the president for Ecumenical Relations. He has two academic passions. The first is the Azusa Street Mission and the revival that exploded there in April 1906. The second is working with Christian leaders all over the world on issues related to the unity of Christ's Church.

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AZUSA STREET SERIES

Travel back in time and
find out what it was like to be part
of the Azusa Street Revival.

Through Frank Bartleman's unvarnished, eyewitness account of Azusa, you'll read about the almost-tangible presence of God experienced by those who were there, as well as the amazing things they saw. Gain insight into the lives and worldviews of early believers and find out how the early twentieth-century Pentecostal Movement swept across Los Angeles, the United States, and, finally, the world.

FRANK BARTLEMAN



Frank Bartleman (1871–1936) was an early Pentecostal evangelist and participant in the Azusa Street Revival. He studied at Temple College and Moody Bible Institute, and spent his early years in ministry in Holiness and Wesleyan churches. In 1905, Bartleman became involved in a spiritual outpouring in Los Angeles that was sparked by the great Welsh Revival. That revival set the stage for the interracial Azusa Street Revival (1906–1909), which became a focal point of the emerging Pentecostal Movement. A prolific author, Bartleman wrote more than 550 articles, one hundred tracts, and six books.

Featuring an introduction by Dr. Cecil M. Robeck Jr.,
a leading scholar of the Azusa Street Revival.

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