Welcome to Memphis

Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity.

Psalm 133:1 from the Amplified Bible

My name is Bishop Charles E. Blake, Sr.

Welcome to Memphis the home of the historic Mason Temple, the site of the Memphis Miracle that occurred twenty-five years ago.

In a scholarly paper, Bishop B. E. Underwood who was the head of the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America (PFNA) in 1994, wrote:

“One of the most dramatic aspects of the Azusa Street Revival was the breaking down of racial barriers in the midst of a racist American society. The statement, which has been often quoted, was that “the blood washed away the color line.” There is no questioning that the Holy Spirit performed a tremendous miracle in bringing to this dynamic movement a unity of the Spirit which transcended the shameful racist culture into which it was born.

But tragedy lurked in the midst of this triumph. The fledgling movement came under vicious attack by the secular media. One of the primary points of this attack was the miracle of racial reconciliation. The press became the spokesmen for a racist society. This blistering attack on the prophetic Pentecostal movement was too much for the Euro/American participants. They succumbed to the pressures of the racist culture, rather than continue to surrender to the gracious work of the Holy Spirit. The manifestation of racial reconciliation survived at Azusa Street for about three years – from 1906 until 1909. With few exceptions, however, all signs of racial unity had disappeared by 1914.

There is no doubt that God almighty was providing a supernatural remedy for racism in America. The recipients of the supernatural outpouring of the Holy Spirit could conceivably have provided a beautiful paradigm shift in the midst of a culture dominated by Jim Crowism. Sadly they missed this God-given opportunity. They heeded a call of the wild rather than the bidding of the Spirit.

The results of this fall has been three quarters of a century of division in the Pentecostal family in America. What a difference it could have made during the civil rights movement in America if all the children of the Pentecostal revival had stood together as a shining example of what God could do to solve the problems of racism and discrimination! For reconciliation! The time has come to recapture our heritage! We gather here as the children of God and heirs of the twentieth century Pentecostal/charismatic renewal of the church. Our Father has called us to unity.

The theme of our meeting is ‘Pentecostal Partners: A Reconciliation Strategy for 21st Century Mission.’ Our goal is to bring healing to this part of the Body of Christ. We really have no choice. Our Lord has called us to unity. The high-priestly prayer of our Savior is that we all may be one, so that the world may believe in the only begotten Son of God. We grieve over the 88 years of rebellion against the reconciliation work of the Holy Spirit. We return with all our hearts to the unity of the Spirit manifested during the blazing revival at Azusa Street.”

He went on to say, “But we have not gathered just to talk about issues. We are here to act.”

As a consequence of that meeting the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA) was created to replace the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America (PFNA) which was formed in 1948 by whit Pentecostal churches but excluded black Pentecostal groups.

That was a God moment.

I believe that we are here this week to go further.

Now twenty-five years after the Memphis Miracle, there is an undeniable resurgence of racial animosity. The shootings at Mother Emmanuel AME Church is Charleston, the shootings at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, the happenings in Charlottesville and so many other demonic acts herald a new and disturbing era in North America and indeed around the world. The rise of White Nationalism has ushered us into perilous times. As people of faith, it is imperative that we renew our commitment to reconciliation and that we aggressively shout the message of love and reconciliation in every venue from the local church pulpit to the places of power in the seat of our national government.

As the leader of the largest predominantly black Pentecostal denomination in the world, I call on the PCCNA to make a strong and unequivocal statement decrying all words and actions that are in opposition to the racial reconciliation that we were established to promote.

This is another God moment. Let's not let it pass.

I implore you to take the initiative to pour the healing balm of love into the mortal spiritual wounds that endanger the nation that we all cherish. This can be the greatest hour of the PCCNA and an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to our founding principles.