

The Promise of the Spirit

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Christ declared that after his ascension, he would send to his church, as his crowning gift, the Comforter, who was to take his place. This Comforter is the Holy Spirit,--the soul of his life, the efficacy of his church, the light and life of the world. With his Spirit Christ sends a reconciling influence and a power that takes away sin.

In the gift of the Spirit, Jesus gave to man the highest good that heaven could bestow. The Saviour looked on humanity, and saw that it was under the power of the prince of darkness; but he saw also that there was hope for human beings because there was power in the divine nature successfully to contend with evil agencies. With glad assurance he said, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

The Spirit was given as a regenerating agency, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of man to this satanic captivity was amazing. Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the third person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fulness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given his Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress his own character upon the church.

Christ said of the Spirit, "He shall glorify me." As Christ glorified the Father by the demonstration of his love, so the Spirit was to glorify Christ by revealing to the world the riches of his grace. The very image of God is to be reproduced in humanity. The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the perfection of the character of his people.

At the cost of infinite sacrifice and suffering, Christ has provided for us every essential to success in the Christian warfare. The Holy Spirit brings power that enables man to overcome. It is through the agency of the Spirit that the government of Satan is to be subdued. It is the Spirit that convinces of sin, and, with the consent of the human being, expels sin from the heart. The mind is then brought under a new law,--the royal law of liberty.

The Spirit works in us by bringing to mind, vividly and often, the precious truths of the plan of redemption. We should forget these truths, and for us God's rich promises would lose their efficiency, were it not for the Spirit, who takes of the things of God, and shows them to us. Our hearts are warmed by the contemplation of Jesus and his love, and we long to speak to others the comforting assurances that have been brought to our minds.

It is the privilege of every son and daughter of God to have the indwelling of the Spirit. If those who know the truth would love and fear the Lord always, if they would abide in Christ, they would have moral and spiritual power. The grace of Christ would be in them as a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life, and would flow from them as streams of living water.

The Spirit illumines our darkness, informs our ignorance, and helps us in our manifold necessities. But the mind must be constantly going out after God. If worldliness is allowed to come in, if we have no desire to pray, no desire to commune with him who is the source of strength and wisdom, the Spirit will not abide with us. Those who are unbelieving do not receive the rich endowment of grace that would make them wise unto salvation, patient, forbearing, quick to perceive and appreciate heavenly ministrations, quick to discern Satan's devices, and strong to resist sin. God can not do his mighty work for them because of their unbelief.

Christ has promised the gift of the Spirit to his church, and the promise belongs to us as much as to the first disciples. But like every other promise, it is given on conditions. There are many who believe, and profess to claim the Lord's promise; they talk about Christ and about the Holy Spirit, yet receive no benefit. They do not surrender the soul to be guided and controlled by the divine agencies. We can not use the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is to use us. Through the Spirit God works in his people "to will and to do of his good pleasure." But many will not submit to this. They want to manage themselves. This is why they do not receive the heavenly gift. Only to those who wait humbly upon God, who watch for his guidance and grace, is the Spirit given.

Christ declared that the divine influence was to be with his followers to the end. But the promise is not accepted and believed by God's people; therefore its fulfilment is not seen. The promise of the Spirit is a matter little thought of; and the result is only what might be expected,--spiritual drought, spiritual weakness, spiritual declension and death. Minor matters occupy the attention, and the divine power that is necessary for the growth and prosperity of the church, and which would bring all other blessings in its train, is lacking, though offered in its infinite plentitude.

Just so long as the church is satisfied with small things will it fail of receiving the great things of God. Why do we not hunger and thirst after the gift of the Spirit, since this is the means by which we are to receive power? Talk of it, pray for it, preach concerning it. The Lord is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to us than parents are to give good gifts to their children.

If our workers realized the responsibility resting upon them, would they enter the work without cherishing a deep sense of its sacredness? Should we not see the deep movings of the Spirit of God upon the men who present themselves for the ministry? For the baptism of the Holy Spirit, every worker should be offering his prayer to God. Companies should be gathered together to ask for special help, for heavenly wisdom, that they may know how to devise and execute. Especially should men pray that God will baptize his missionaries with the Holy Spirit.

There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, putting aside self, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God. If men will endure the necessary discipline, without complaining or fainting by the way, God will teach them hour by hour, and day by day. He longs to reveal his grace. If his people will remove the obstructions, he will pour forth the waters of salvation in abundant streams through human channels. If men in humble life were encouraged to do all the good they could do, if restraining hands were not laid upon them to repress the zeal, there would be one hundred workers for Christ where now there is one.

God takes men as they are, and educates them for his service, if they will yield themselves to him. The Spirit of God, received into the soul, will quicken all its faculties. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the mind that is devoted unreservedly to God develops harmoniously, and is strengthened to comprehend and fulfil the requirements of God. The weak, vacillating character becomes changed to one of strength and steadfastness. Continual devotion establishes so close a relation between Jesus and his disciples that the Christian becomes like him in mind and character. Through a connection with Christ he will have clearer and broader views. His discernment will be more penetrative, his judgment better balanced.

The presence of the Holy Spirit with God's workers will give the presentation of truth a power that not all the honor or glory of the world could give. The Spirit furnishes the strength that sustains striving, wrestling souls in every emergency, amid the unfriendliness of relatives, the hatred of the world, and the realization of their own imperfections and mistakes.

A union of divine and human endeavor, a close connection first, last, and ever, with God, the source of all strength,--this is absolutely necessary in our work.