

BACK TO BETHEL

Separation from Sin, and Fellowship with GOD

by

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"Old Testament Heroes," "Meet for the Master's Use," etc.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THIS DISPENSATION

GOD made the world in ages. There was the age of creation; the age that culminated in the deluge; the age of Israel; and we are living in the age which commenced on the day of Pentecost, and will close with the second advent of our Lord.

Just as JESUS was born on a definite day which we celebrate as Christmas day, and came into new relations with the world which will never be dissolved, so also on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came into new relations with men.

Just as we date the chronology of the world from the advent of our Lord, so we should date the history of the church from the advent of the Holy Spirit.

Indeed, there is a precise parallel, which you will see in a moment.

Our Lord was in the world before His birth, but at His birth He took a human body. The Holy Spirit was in the world before the day of Pentecost, but at Pentecost He took on a body. He is now tenanting that body, which is composed of all believers in every age and every clime. As JESUS CHRIST was literally in the world, so I believe the Holy Spirit is literally present in the church of CHRIST, and in every gathering of that church.

I do not think you can locate the Spirit of GOD. I do not think you can say there is more of Him here than there. I believe He is as much in this church today as in the upper room on the day of Pentecost, only our eyes are holden and we have lost the power to see Him.

Our Lord distinctly taught in John 14:20: **"In that day (the day of Pentecost), ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you."**

Three things are matters of common knowledge that JESUS is GOD, that our standing is in Him, and that His life, begun in us now, is to have fruition in the future.

In the present age the Holy Ghost reveals JESUS, and JESUS reveals the Father, and I believe there is a further stage in the Christian experience in which the Father reveals Himself. JESUS indicates that at the day of Pentecost a new epoch began.

There are thousands of Christians living on this side of Pentecost, as if that great event had never occurred. They are living on the same plan as the early disciples before they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Historically and chronologically they are on this side, experimentally they are on the other side of Pentecost.

This wonderful age in which we live, therefore, is pre-eminently the age of the Holy Spirit. It is also the age of the formation of the church of CHRIST. It is the age in which the Spirit of GOD and the church bear a double witness to CHRIST. And the Spirit of GOD is leading the church out into missions.

I need spend no time in showing that the Spirit of GOD was at work all through the Old Testament.

There are three departments in His work His work in creation (Genesis 1:13); His work in inspiration (II Peter 1:21); and His work in quickening elect souls, as when He clothed Himself with Gideon (Judges 6:34), and moved in and through him to the accomplishment of His purposes.

I asked a man once whether there was more electricity in the world today, or in the time of Frederick the Great, or in the Garden of Eden. The man looked very wise, and said of course there was more today than ever before. I said to him.

"There always was as much as there is now. The only difference is that certain persons have discovered the laws by which electricity can be applied."

Now I hope you will understand me when I say that is a precise illustration of what the blessed JESUS has done for us all.

The Holy Spirit was in the world before the birth of CHRIST, but CHRIST, in His earthly life, revealed the laws of His operation, so that anybody and everybody in the true church may now avail himself of the power of the Holy Spirit, which previously was reserved for an Isaiah or a Daniel, or some other favored person. This was anticipated by Joel, who said that in the last days GOD would pour out His spirit upon all flesh.

Perhaps you have been in Switzerland, and witnessed what I have seen. I have gone out on the veranda of the hotel at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning, and looked at the range of mountains that rose before me. At first all is gray and damp and chilly. But as I look, it seems as if GOD's angel has been stepping from one summit to another, lighting fires all along his path. Beneath, the mist still hangs over the valley, the clouds roll and tumble in endless confusion.

As I wait and watch, the sun rises. The mists roll up and disappear.

By the time the sun reaches the meridian, his rays have poured into every nook and crevice in the valley.

So I think the Holy Ghost before Pentecost struck with living flame only the great mountain peaks among men. That summit was Moses; that, Samson; that, David; that, Jeremiah. But at the day of Pentecost, He who had been given only to the spiritual aristocrats of the race, became the common property of the democracy. **"I will pour out of My spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit"** (Acts 2:17, 18).

MEN SHOULD ACCEPT THIS POWER

What folly it would be for a man to say he was not going to avail himself of the uses of electricity, but would go on in the same old way of past centuries! But did you ever think, my friend, that if you are content to live your life without the power which is within your reach, and which GOD sent to enable you to live better, you are making the same mistake?

You say you want to live like CHRIST and follow in His steps, and yet you are refusing to make use of the power which He has supplied. You say you always thought the power of the Holy Ghost was a spasmodic thing that came where people could stand the strain of a whole night in prayer or some other emotional experience.

You have thought that you must leave the baptism of the Holy Spirit for people who were differently constituted from yourself. I thought that once. But I found this text in Romans 8:2: **"The law of the Spirit of Life."**

We know enough about Edison to know that he is not a man who works himself up to a high pitch of nervous excitement before he completes a discovery. He simply obeys certain laws. The law of the Spirit of life is for anybody and everybody who will obey. If a man is clean and pure in heart and lives near GOD, he can always count on the operation of the Spirit of GOD. In your home you touch a spring or turn a key and the whole room is filled with light. Just as surely you can be filled with the light of the Spirit of life if you will obey the law.

CHRIST'S BAPTISM

When our Saviour was on earth, He lived for thirty years in Nazareth, and He was taught the laws of the Spirit. He waited until the moment came for Him to be endued and anointed with the Spirit. He went to the Jordan and was baptized. In His baptism - He identified Himself with the sins of man. He rose from the water as an obedient child of GOD, and the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove and rested upon Him. He went to the wilderness and was tempted. He came back, and stood in the synagogue, and said: **"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, and He hath anointed Me to preach."**

The blessed Saviour would not begin to help a dying, broken-hearted world until He was sure He had the power of the Spirit of GOD.

Before He left this world He said: "**I will pray the Father and He will send you another Comforter.**"

When JESUS CHRIST received the Spirit, He received Him for His church, and for you and me.

He gave Him to His church, to be its permanent possession during the present age; and He waits to give each individual member of that church his or her share in Pentecost, on the one condition of applying for it by faith.

As you took forgiveness from the hand of the dying CHRIST, take your share of the Pentecostal gift from the hand of the living CHRIST.

Don't think that blessed gift is only for elect men and for special work. I want you to understand the fullness of the Spirit is for every believer, to make you the men and women you want to be. The failure of your life that you complain of is that you are trying to attain the ideal without the power which alone makes the ideal possible.

The blessing of the day of Pentecost is always described as being "filled" with the Holy Spirit.

GOD's will for believers is that they should be filled, women as well as men. As full as the tree is of sap when it rises from the roots and fills the furthestmost branches, so we are to be filled with the Spirit until Christian fruitfulness is as natural to us as the flower and fruit to the tree. We may be as full of the Spirit as the tree is of sap, as the body is of life, as the mind is full of thought, as the heart is full of love, as the cold, dull iron is filled with the white flame of the furnace.

When we are living in the power of the Spirit our old sins will have no part in us because we are filled with something better. This is the true idea of becoming holy.

Some people say that you must give up this and that and the other, until the soul is bewildered. Let the love of GOD come in, let the purity of CHRIST fill you, and then the evil thought, the unholy word which have been the curse of your life, will naturally drop off.

Just as the sap in the tree forces off the dead leaves in the spring, so if we are filled with the Spirit of GOD, the things which have cursed our lives will drop off naturally. It is GOD's ideal.

REGENERATING AND FILLING

You have known the Holy Ghost regenerating and quickening and blessing you. But have you known Him infilling you with His mighty presence and power?

I am prepared to admit that this should be the experience of the young convert, and might if he were properly instructed.

I remember reading the story of a young fellow named Joseph, who belonged to one of your American cities. He was of a wild and evil disposition, the trial and torment of the local ministers, who gave orders that he must not be admitted to their churches on GOD's day. A camp meeting was held nearby.

The third day Joseph was powerfully convicted of sin, and went forward and knelt at the penitents' form. An old lady, who was watching him, also went forward and knelt at his side. After several hours of agonizing prayer Joseph came into the full light of GOD.

The lady asked him to call at her house on his way home that she might give him a tract called "*Counsel to Young Converts.*" By mistake, however, she gave him a tract on the filling of the Holy Ghost.

Joseph read it. He saw that the attitude of heart by which he received pardon was the attitude by which he could now receive all that CHRIST had further to bestow. He immediately entered into a joyous consciousness of the risen CHRIST; because when the soul is filled with the Holy Ghost, it is conscious, not of Him, but of CHRIST, whose face He reveals.

If you, friend, are unsaved and unregenerate up to this moment, in the name of JESUS I bid you look to Him!

- Not to the Cross, but to Him who hung there!
- Not to the grave, but to Him who passed through it, and rose again!
- Not to the Bible, but to Him of whom it testifies!
- Not to the Holy Spirit, but to Him whom He glorifies!

The moment you do so in faith, you are saved!

The Spirit of GOD came suddenly upon the church at Pentecost. He came suddenly upon the church at Samaria. He came suddenly upon Cornelius in Acts 10. I believe, therefore, that the soul may suddenly receive and apprehend the great power of the Holy Spirit. You can be filled a drop at a time, just as you can fill a well with water a drop at a time, or by turning a stream into it.

FIVE TESTS

There are just five tests by which you may know that you have received this infilling. Let me give them to you.

A LIVING CHRIST

I. *Is the Lord JESUS CHRIST a living reality to you?* (John 16:13, 14).

How do you look at JESUS CHRIST?

A great many Christians look at CHRIST away back on the Cross nineteen hundred years ago, but they have no perception of CHRIST as a living presence with them day by day. When a man is filled with the Holy Spirit he does not talk much about the Spirit, but about CHRIST, because the whole aim of the Holy Spirit is to shed light upon JESUS.

The people who talk about the Holy Ghost as if He were their Lord make a profound mistake. The Spirit does not glorify Himself or reveal Himself, but reveals JESUS; and hence the person who is most filled with the Spirit talks most about JESUS CHRIST as a living personality in his experience.

A striking episode took place in the life of Dr. Dale, of Birmingham, England, one Eastertide. As he was preparing his Easter sermon, it seemed as if JESUS glided into his study. His presence was so manifest to his heart that he said:

"JESUS is really alive! JESUS is really here! My people shall know that JESUS is really here!"

Ever since then, at Carr's Lane Chapel they sing an Easter hymn every Sabbath morning to remind them that CHRIST is really present.

Have you had an experience like that? Business man in your counting house, mother in your home, young man in your study, have you said to yourself:

"JESUS is here! JESUS is alive!"

You may know it; and if you do not, you are not filled with the Holy Ghost.

ASSURANCE

2. Have you assurance that you are a child of GOD?

There are many in our churches who dare not say with Paul, "**I KNOW whom I have believed.**" They are dishonoring GOD by not believing His Word. If you are filled with His Spirit, He will bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of GOD (Romans 8:16).

You may be a Christian without knowing it. If I save a person from drowning, the doctor may come and say, "Yes, that life is saved," but the person may be unconscious of it for two hours or more. So you may be a Christian, and the consciousness of your salvation may not come for a day or a month or a year. But directly you receive the Spirit of GOD, you will know you are saved. Even though you have no emotional enjoyment, you know you are saved. There is a deeper consciousness which the presence or absence of emotion does not affect.

When I come to my house at night, my little child comes running to meet me, knowing that I have candy for her in my pocket. To test her affection, I leave the candy and come home without it. She meets me just the same and I say:

"My child, I have no candy for you."

She replies: "Father, I don't come for the candy, I come for you."

I drop the candy to see if the child really cares for me, and so GOD drops the happy feelings to see if we really care for Him, for Himself. But apart from feelings, there is a clear consciousness of GOD as our Father.

VICTORY OVER KNOWN SIN

3. *Have you victory over known sin?* (Galatians 5:16-22). **"Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the fast of the flesh."**

I do not ask if you are sinless - you cannot be that in this life. A girl dusted a room in the early winter morning and did her best. At noon her mistress called her in and asked:

"Did you dust this room today?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well, look at all the dust!"

"Well, ma'am, the light was dim this morning, and it looks different in the sunlight!"

So I am not asking if you are free from sin up to GOD's standard, which includes sins of omission as well as sins of commission; but are you kept from known sin up to the light GOD has given you? If you are being constantly overcome you are not filled with the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is like an antiseptic to impure thoughts, and unclean desires, and things which are selfish and worldly and abominable. I wish you to understand that the Christian life does not consist in avoiding this or that, but in being so saturated with something better that you have no desire for these sinful things.

Some have only enough religion to make them miserable. The child which has had a good meal does not want the bones over which the dogs are fighting in the street. When you are perfectly satisfied and filled, you are delivered from the opposite. If you are full of the Spirit, you are delivered from the power of sin. You will be kept full of JESUS and holy desires,, and the epidemic of sin will have no fascination over you.

Christian man, you say you can't do without whiskey? Young fellow, you say you can't get rid of that bad habit? Young girl, you say you can't get the better of jealousy and gossip? Tell me, would GOD give us an ideal and leave us to wallow in the marsh of our own helplessness and impurity? No! JESUS CHRIST is not a theory, but a living power in one's life. You can be delivered from the claims of sin.

POWER IN WITNESS-BEARING

4. *Have you power in witness-bearing? (Acts 1:8).*

Can you speak to others for GOD? If you are with a man who swears, can you stop him? Do you feel it an effort or natural? If you feel it an effort, you have not got what I am talking about. If you have, you will find it natural and easy.

I believe it is just the overflowing of our hearts which does people good. The forced, mechanical effort of our mind does not amount to much. It is not difficult for the bird to sing, for the child to laugh, and it should not be difficult for you to speak for JESUS. If you are living in CHRIST, and CHRIST lives in you, the living waters ought to spring up and overflow.

5. *Have you the spirit of holy love (Acts 2:45-47)?* This I need not dwell on.

Is JESUS real to you? Have you assurance of sonship? Do you have the victory over your flesh? Are you able to bear witness as the early disciples did? Are you filled with the spirit of love? If not, there are three steps necessary confession, surrender and faith.

CONFESSION

Before GOD can come into your soul there will have to be a setting right of things which are not as they should be. I have gone through it all myself. There were things in my heart years ago that choked out all of GOD's fullness. As I knelt before GOD, there was one thing in my life about which GOD seemed to say:

"As long as that thing is permitted in your life, I cannot give you the fulness of the Spirit's indwelling."

It was an awful fight, because I liked it, and thought I could not live without it. But, do you know, as I look back at that thing now, I think what a fool I was to nearly lose all for that which I now hate; for the minute you give up a wrong thing, you begin to hate it.

Perhaps it is the habit of excessive smoking which some of you men have. It may be some of you women use morphine. Perhaps in your business you are doing things which are not strictly right. If you are doing anything which your conscience condemns, you cannot have GOD's best. If you cannot give it up yourself, then say to GOD:

"I am not willing to give it up, but I am willing to be made willing."

SURRENDER

Then comes Surrender. You must be prepared to take the second step, and say:

"I yield myself wholly to Thee, my Lord and Saviour. I place myself on the altar. I abandon myself entirely and absolutely to Thy will and service."

FAITH

Then follows Faith. Galatians 3:14 tells us that we may receive the promise of the Holy Spirit by faith, just as we receive forgiveness, or any other spiritual gift. You may not have the immediate gush of blessed emotion, but you must go on reckoning that you have received, because you have fulfilled GOD's conditions.

Dare to start on your way home, sure that you have received, if you have complied with GOD's conditions. Then seek the filling again and again, whenever the power of the Spirit waxes low in your soul.

There are five steps which you must take. They are as follows:

1. There is such a blessing as the filling of the Holy Spirit.
2. It is for me. JESUS obtained it when He ascended on high, and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious.
3. I have not got it.
4. I am willing to make any sacrifice that is necessary to receive it.
5. I open my heart now to receive it.

Take those steps, and go forth to live a real life. Don't talk about the filling. Live it! Go forth to shine, and speak, and love, and suffer (if need be), in the power of the Holy Spirit.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

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