The Presence And Power Of The Spirit

By Samuel Chadwick

The church is helpless without the presence and power of the Spirit. The human resources of the church were never so great. The opportunities of the church were never so glorious. The need for the work of the church was never so urgent. The crisis is momentous; and the church staggers helplessly amid it all. The church has lost the note of authority, the secret of wisdom, and the gift of power, through persistent and willful neglect of the Holy Spirit of God. Confusion and impotence are inevitable when the wisdom and resources of the world are substituted for the presence and power of the Spirit of God.

The presence of the Spirit is vital and central to the work of the church. Nothing else avails. Apart from Him wisdom becomes folly, and strength weakness. Scholarship is blind to spiritual truth till He reveals. Worship is idolatry till He inspires. Preaching is powerless if it be not a demonstration of His power. Prayer is vain unless He energizes. Human resources of learning and organization, wealth and enthusiasm, reform and philanthropy, are worse than useless if there be no Holy Ghost in them. The church always fails at the point of self-confidence. When the church is run on the same lines as a circus, there may be crowds, but there is no Shekinah.

That is why prayer is the test of faith and the secret of power. The Spirit of God travails in the prayer life of the soul. Miracles are the direct work of His power, and without miracles the church cannot live. The carnal can argue, but it is the Spirit that convicts. Education can civilize, but it is being born of the Spirit that saves. The energy of the flesh can run bazaars, organize amusements, and raise millions; but it is the presence of the Holy Spirit that makes a temple of the Living God. The root trouble of the present distress is that the church has more faith in the world and the flesh than in the Holy Ghost, and things will get no better till we get back to His realized presence and power. The breath of the four winds would turn death into life and dry bones into mighty armies, but it only comes by prayer.

The Gift of the Holy Spirit

The story of Pentecost reveals what the gift [of the Holy Spirit] did for individual men, as well as for the whole company. Peter moves in the blaze of the sun. Throughout the gospel narrative he is a man of generous impulses, with many failings. He utters his resolves with the emphasis of the irresolute, and often fails in the hour of testing. Pentecost reveals him transformed. He has the certainty of revealed truth in his speech, and the confidence of invincible power in his bearing. The man who cringed and skulked a few days ago stands upon both feet, utterly destitute of fear. Temperament and natural aptitude are unchanged, but the man is radiant with a new energy, transfigured with a new Spirit, effective with a new power. He speaks with the same Galilean accent; but the utterance is of the Holy Ghost.

Paul put the same truth another way when he said: *"I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me"* (Gal. 2:20). The indwelling Presence is clothed

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with sanctified manhood, and becomes the very life of life, and the very soul of the soul, "I live; yet no longer I."

The apostle attributes all spiritual effectiveness to the indwelling power. *"Our sufficiency,"* he says, *"is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the Spirit: for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life"* (2 Cor. 3:5-6). There are other kinds of ability than that which comes of God through the Spirit, but they are death-dealing and never life-giving. It is the Spirit that quickens. Everything else fails. The letter may be faultlessly orthodox, the method may be marvelously ingenious, the man may be tremendously earnest, but only the God-made, God-inspired, God-enabled avails. Carnalities kill. The power that quickens, transforms, perfects, is of God the Spirit. There never was so much human perfection in the church, but the New Jerusalem is not built up by the powers of Babylon; it comes down out of heaven from God. Believers without the Holy Ghost cannot do the work of the Spirit.

The Spirit Works Through Unlikely Men

It is this mystery that has filled the history of the church with anomalies. Inadequate men are always doing impossible things, and ordinary men achieve extraordinary results. God's biggest things seem to be done by the most unlikely people. Unknown Davids kill terrifying Goliaths. The weak confound the mighty, and things hid from the learned and wise are made known to unlearned and ignorant men. The All-wise seems to delight in nothing so much as turning the wisdom of the vain to folly, and the strength of the proud to shame. He has declared the insufficiency of all but Himself, but man struts and sets himself to demonstrate his own sufficiency. Pride of logic, pride of skill, pride of personality, pride of power, perpetuate the spirit of Babel in the church of God with the same inevitable result. It ends in defeat, disaster, and dishonor. There is no conquest of the world for God but by the Holy Ghost. He alone can convict the world *"in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment"* (John 16:8). There is no other power that can do that, and without conviction there can be neither the salvation of the soul nor the coming of the kingdom.

Do We Have the Spirit's Power?

The gift of the Spirit is God's gift of power, for effective witnessing, holiness of life, and consecrated service. Do we measure up to the standard of the fullness of Pentecost?

Have we power over sin? The Spirit of Truth is the Spirit of Holiness. He sanctifies in truth. The Day of Pentecost changed carnal thought into spiritual vision, pride into humility, selfishness into love, and cowardice into courage. It changed hearts, and transformed lives. Victory comes by fullness. Have we the joy of conquest over sin? Is the character of the average Christian anywhere near the standard of a Spirit-filled soul? What about the love of the world? Jesus said He was One *"whom the world cannot receive"* (John 14:17). They are in irreconcilable antagonism. What has come of the doctrine of separation? If believers were filled with the Spirit, would they haunt the world's gaudy fountains and brackish springs? It is mockery to profess fullness, and go about panting with thirst and gasping with vanity.

What about the power for service? Is our decline due to external difficulties or internal

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weakness? Think of the host of workers, the vastness and variety of their service, the earnestness and ingenuity of their labors, and the scanty result of it all. What influence has the church upon the life of the people, and what impression does it make upon the strongholds of iniquity? What about the dearth of conversions? The gift of the Spirit is the gift of power, and the lack of power is due to the absence of His indwelling fullness.

The Call of Pentecostal Fullness

There is no doubt that the one thing needful for the church is the blessing of Pentecostal fullness. The flood would sweep away all the rubbish, fill all the dikes, and fertilize all the desert. The work of God cannot be accomplished without the fullness of the Spirit, and everywhere God waits to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. It is His will that every believer should be filled with the Spirit, overflow in the power of the Spirit, and in all things prevail through the Spirit. What hinders? The blessing is for all, and for all now. The conditions are simple, unalterable, and universal. God waits to fill ordinary people with extraordinary power, and to turn a baffled faith into a rapturous conquest.

The Steps of Faith

Now what are the steps of faith by which the blessing is appropriated?

The first step is to repent. *"And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost"* (Acts 2:38). There is a repentance of believers as well as of sinners. When men begin to pray for the blessing of Pentecost the answer begins in conviction of sin. Things are not surrendered, indulgences retained against light, possessions held for selfish ends – these must all be surrendered to the supreme authority of Christ. For until He is exalted, crowned, glorified, there can be no Pentecost.

The second step is to ask. *"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"* (Luke 11:13). There must be definite asking for the specific gift. I was talking with a farmer a few years ago about prayer, and he said all the preachers he heard just now were urging people to pray and come to prayer meetings. "But," he said, "to my mind, desire has a good deal to do with praying, and praying is a slack business when desire is lacking." There must be desire that is focused into petition. *"Ye have not,"* says James, *"because ye ask not"* (Jas. 4:2), and there are thousands of believers who have never definitely asked for the Blessing. God waits to give, but He is a God of discretion, and waits to be asked. *"I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it...For this, moreover will I be inquired of by the house of Israel; to do it for them"* (Ezek. 36:36-37).

We must be careful not to ask amiss. Nothing hinders faith so effectually as a wrong motive. *"How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"* (John 5:44). James traces the failure of prayer to the same source: *"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures"* (Jas. 4:3). The pleasures may be lawful and laudable enough, but God will not give the glory of His Son to another, but the mission of the Spirit is to glorify the Son. If the power is sought for

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success in Christian service merely, it will not be given. Christ must be supreme in affection and aim.

The third step is to receive. When the consecration is complete the act of faith is quite simple. "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" is the all inclusive command. *"Therefore I say unto you, all things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them"* (Mark 11:24). Take God at His Word.

The fourth step is the continuous life of obedience. Jesus Christ identifies faith with obedience, and in the Acts of the Apostles obedience is made the condition of receiving and retaining the Spirit. *"And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him"* (Acts 5:32). Abiding fullness depends upon obedience to the everwidening circle of illumination. The blessing of Pentecost may be lost, and it is always lost when obedience fails. The Spirit-filled must be Spirit-ruled. We are ministers of the Spirit through whom the supply is conveyed. Those who are greatly used of God have no monopoly of the Holy Ghost; they are mighty through God because the Spirit has a monopoly of them.

Again I say this extraordinary gift is for ordinary people. All may be filled as full and as truly as the hundred and twenty on the day of Pentecost. The conditions are the same for all. *Repent, Ask, Receive, Obey.*

– Adapted from *The Way to Pentecost*.

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