

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

THE BAPTISM
OF THE
HOLY GHOST

*The Essential Preparation for all
Christian Work.*

A FEW WORDS ON ACTS I. & II.

FROM

REV. BARCLAY F. BUXTON, M.A.

LONDON :

S. W. PARTRIDGE & CO.,
9, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

INTRODUCTION.

THE following pages on the Need, the Promise, and the Gift of the Holy Ghost to those who are in Christ were addressed, in the first place, to the Missionaries of all Protestant denominations in Japan. They are now published in England, with much prayer that they may lead some, who only theologically know about the Holy Ghost, to seek a personal knowledge of Him who alone can make us strong and successful soldiers of the Cross.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
CHAP. I.—THE PROMISE	5
II.—THE DEEP NEED...	6
III.—THE REMEDY	10
IV.—WHAT IS PROMISED ? ...	12
V.—SHALL WE SEEK OR NOT ?	17
VI.—WAITING ...	20
VII.—RECEIVING	26
VIII.—THE SPIRIT OFFERED TO ALL	31
IX.—CHRISTIAN LIFE IN THIS POWER ...	36

CHAPTER I.

THE PROMISE.

THE CONDITION.—Wait for the promise of the Father (Acts I., 4).

THE CERTAIN RESULT.—Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost (ver. 5).

THE EFFECT.—Ye shall receive power (ver. 8).

SUCH is the promise of the Lord Jesus to His Church. Such is His expectation, and hope, and desire, for each redeemed one. Just as His purpose towards a sinner is that he may be saved by the blood, so His purpose towards a saint is that he may be filled with the Holy Ghost. As we urge sinners to be saved, so let us urge the unsatisfied people of God to be filled with the Holy Ghost.

We all know how the early disciples laid hold of these promises with strong faith and determination. Are we doing so? We know how gloriously the Promise of the Father was fulfilled in them. Has God fulfilled it to us? We need have no doubt as to whether He has or not. The change wrought by the Baptism of the Holy Ghost is so marked and supernatural that any one can tell whether he has received or not.

The abundant fulfilment of the Promise that God gave to these disciples encourages us not to rest until we have obtained the like blessing. Let us,

then, go over with unprejudiced minds the story of how the early disciples received the Holy Ghost. By this we can get a clear understanding of what God promises to do, and of how we can get Him to do it for us.

And by seeing how ready God is to baptise any individual soul with the Holy Ghost our own eager longings for that blessing must be stirred up; and our faith strengthened to ask and accept this great favour and grace. Let us draw near to this deeply momentous subject in a humble, teachable spirit. Let us lay aside our own ideas, and the excuses by which we have silenced our consciences in the past with regard to it. Let us accept no one else's opinion, and certainly not that of the writer of this tract. But let us believe that God is ready to lead seeking souls into all the blessing he has for them; and therefore take up this attitude:—

“I will hear what God the Lord will say unto me.”

And whatever He does say let us be prepared to accept at all costs.

CHAPTER II.

THE DEEP NEED.

CHRIST was going to leave His little Church. His personal presence had been their joy, and delight, and glory. And more than that, He had brought them near to God. He had given them power over all the power of the enemy. He had guided and

instructed them. He had been their comforter in persecution, their example in daily life, their strength in trial. His word and His example had been constant fuel to their zeal for the Kingdom of God. And yet they were soon to be bereft of Him who was now their all in all.

Fiery trial awaited them. The World, the Flesh, and the Devil would do their utmost against them. The World had persecuted their Lord because He testified against it. It would persecute them if they testified against it; or it would try to modify their testimony. The Flesh had been strong in them whilst their Lord had been with them. How much more would it prevail now? Satan would do his utmost to stamp out the Kingdom of God. How could that little Church hope to be successful against such odds?

We are in exactly the same position. The same dangers confront us. The same mighty foes are sure to attack all who range themselves under Christ's banner, and really mean whole-heartedly to bear His name in this world. The enemy is just as cruel, and as clever, and as strong now as he was in the first century. Is it possible to stand our ground? Can we be victorious? When we remember Satan's power and resources, is it not utterly absurd to think of continuous victory?

May we not as well settle down, as most Christians do, with the expectation of frequent defeat? Well might we do so if we looked only at the power of our enemy. But looking to our Lord Jesus, who can fill us with divine power, we have no right to expect anything but continuous victory.

But Christ expected His Church not merely to hold their own, but to actively push His cause until the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of His Father. He expected them to make successful inroads upon the kingdom of Satan, that precious souls might be saved from his power. He expected them boldly to march on for the salvation of the world, in spite of all that the priests and rulers could do to stop them. And He expects it of us who form His Church now. The fact that for 1800 years Christians have failed in urging on the Kingdom of God, and have allowed souls to rush on to hell unwarned, is no excuse for us to do the same. We must get back to Apostolical Christianity in its supernatural power. Christ expects of us, as He did of them, that we will make it our first business in this world to rescue sinners, and He moreover expects us so to work that we shall be successful in their rescue.

But how could this be? Surely the more we think of the situation the more we must be convinced that Christ had somehow miscalculated, and been mistaken, in leaving 120 disciples to conquer the world for Him. They had no natural powers to effect this. They were not men of position, wealth, learning, or influence. Most of them were working men and women. In their own land they had against them all the power of the priests who had got their Lord crucified, and would probably crucify them too if they pressed His kingdom upon public notice. And yet Judea was their most hopeful sphere of work. Beyond that lay Greece and Rome, with the power of their rulers and the antiquity of their established

religions. Yet Christ expected His disciples to conquer these also for Him.

In these days we have the same worldly powers against us. Worldly customs, worldly religions strong in their antiquity, satanic powers, fleshly lusts, rule over the vast majority of human beings. Yet Christ expects us to set them free (Is. xlix., 9). He expects us to make His kingdom victorious (Dan. ii., 44). He has wrought out a marvellous salvation for these souls at infinite cost. He has entrusted it to us, and He expects us to make it effective amongst men, in spite of all the devilish and fleshly opposition. Has He not made a mistake? Has He not miscalculated our weakness, and expects too much of us; or the strength of our foes, and thinks too little of them?

No! His calculations are accurate. It can be done! Souls can be saved! The victory is secure to us! Satan's kingdom shall be destroyed! And this is the secret of victory—which has too long been left out of our calculations, though it was the hope and basis of Christ's—

YE SHALL RECEIVE POWER, AFTER THAT THE HOLY
GHOST IS COME UPON YOU.

Here is Divine, Omnipotent, Victorious Power. Without it, it is folly to think that we can be successful as Christian workers. With it, success is certain. Oh, Christians! has He yet come upon you? It is a question of life or death to precious souls about you. Do not dare to rest until you have the assurance that God has given you what He means by "the Holy Ghost coming upon you."

CHAPTER III.

THE REMEDY.

EVERYONE who undertakes Christian work is setting out to make war upon a king who is all but almighty. We may well sit down (Luke xiv., 31) first, and consult whether our resources are sufficient to carry on the war successfully; for Christian workers who fail in the great end of their ministry—the salvation of others from the power of Satan—are really a hindrance in the victorious progress of the Gospel.

If the enemy has all but almighty power, we shall not prevail unless we have almighty power at our disposal. No wonder the parting message of Jesus to His little Church was, “Tarry ye at Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.” Not to them only is the command given. It comes down to us with living power and force. Let any Christian beware of disobeying it!

Yet many do disobey it, and plunge into Christian work before they have been baptised with the Holy Ghost. And they seem to be justified in doing so. Might not the early disciples, in eager haste, have said, “Lord, sinners are dying, and going to hell. We are saved, and can point out the way to them. Surely, Thou dost not mean us to tarry.” And if the Lord had said, “You have not yet the divine equipment,” might they not have answered, “What more do we need? Have we not had personal intercourse for months with Thee? Do we not know Thy teaching? Have we not seen Thy miracles? Have

we not by Thy Spirit experienced the New Birth? And more—did we not see Thee suffer, and do we not now know that that made full atonement for our sins? Were we not witnesses of Thy Resurrection? Have we not seen Thee in Thy risen body? Hast Thou not opened our understandings to understand the Scriptures? Have we not received Thy commandments concerning Thy Kingdom (Acts i., 2)? What further equipment can we need for preaching the Gospel?"

No! These things were all very well and very blessed, but they did not equip them for preaching the Gospel. These are like the cannon ball and the powder—harmless against the kingdom of Satan until the fire is applied. Therefore must they tarry till they are baptised with fire and with the Holy Ghost.

Have we taken this to heart? If it means anything, it means that the experience of God's salvation, the knowledge of the Bible, a lengthened experience of Christian life, a zeal for the Lord, are not enough to qualify a man to extend the kingdom and to win souls. These are essential for a soul-winner, but these give him none of the divine power that his divine work needs. Oh, that all who have not yet received may tarry before the Lord till they have received "the crown of the anointing oil of our God" (Lev. xxi., 12).

Then would be fulfilled Christ's purpose towards the world. That purpose is, that though He, the one Anointed one, was going away, there should remain in the world many anointed ones; and that upon each one of these a double portion (see the type in

2 Kings ii., 9—11) of His Spirit should rest: whereby they should live as He lived (1 John ii., 6); speak as He spoke; and work as He worked (John xiv., 12). Thus, and thus only, should they be successful fishers of men. Thus, and thus only, can we be the blessing in this world that Christ purposed that His disciples should be.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT IS PROMISED?

THESE disciples were clearly informed as to the blessing that the Holy Ghost would be to them. If we would claim any blessing from the Lord, it is of importance that we should first clearly and intelligently understand what He covenants to give. It is only when we clearly realise this, that our hearts will really hunger and thirst for it; and our faith will be encouraged and strengthened to lay hold of God. Besides, only then can we pray with power when we understand and eagerly desire what we pray for, for prayer that brings down the blessing (Ezek. xxxvi., 37) must clearly state (Mark x., 51) the needs of the one who prays.

These disciples had the Old Testament in their hands and the words of Jesus in their remembrance. From these two sources they could gather a complete idea of what the Comforter would be to them. From

these two sources let us see what they probably expected. Their expectations stirred them up to seek and obtain this blessing. May our hearts also be stirred as we ponder these rich and full promises.

Taking the Old Testament, we see many direct promises of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, which speak of its glorious effects in men's hearts. For instance, we are told in Isaiah xxxii., 14—18 that the blessed Comforter brings fruitfulness, righteousness, and peace to the heart that before was full of the thorns and briars of sin (ver. 13), and the wild beasts of carnal lusts (ver. 14). Reading Isaiah xlv., we see that the outpouring of the Spirit (ver. 3) brings vigour into spiritual life (ver. 4) and boldness in testimony (ver. 5). From Ezek. xxxvi. we gather that one cleansed (ver. 25) and filled with the Spirit (ver. 27) has power to obey God and do His will. The Holy Ghost, through His servant Joel (ii., 28), tells us that where the Spirit is outpoured there will be the bold preaching of the Gospel by men and women, and there revelations of spiritual things will be given.

Would not such glorious certainties be enough in themselves to spur us on to obtain this blessing? For all these promises can be fulfilled now in us.

But we have more than this. Those early disciples would be sure to remember the power and success of the lives of those men upon whom the Spirit came. By the Holy Ghost Moses (Ex. iii., 12, Num. xi., 17) had boldly stood before Pharaoh, giving Him God's message; and had successfully led a whole nation out of slavery to the borders of Canaan. By this power Samson (Judges xiii., 25,

xiv., 6, xv., 14) had been more than conqueror. By it David (1 Sam. xvi., 13) had sung, and fought, and ruled. By it Elijah had had power to shut heaven, and also to open it in blessing upon the whole land. By the fulness of the Holy Ghost many others had become workers and conquerors for God, and deliverers and inspirers of others. By this Spirit prophets saw into the sin and misery about them; but clearly saw also the coming Saviour, who would save from sin, and abundantly make up for all that sin had wrought.

The experience of these men might well encourage us to seek the like blessing. And it gives us more than encouragement. For if the Spirit was thus in large measure poured out upon individuals in the Old Testament dispensation, how much more will God give Him to us who live in the dispensation of the Holy Ghost!

The same Spirit who had wrought so effectually and so mightily in the old saints was promised to the disciples. With what joy and hope their hearts must have bounded when they grasped the promise that the Spirit whereby these saints of old worked, and fought, and spoke, and endured should come in overflowing measure upon them. The same prospect is before anyone now who will stir himself up to seek. Has such a prospect caused my heart to bound with joyful hope and determination to obtain the fulfilment of such rich promises?

But they had (and we too have) not only the Old Testament, but the words of Christ Himself, telling what the Baptism of the Holy Ghost is to them that receive.

This was the chief subject of our Lord's last words to them. He was trying to stir their hearts about the Holy Ghost, even as He does the hearts of His people now, that they might seek and be willing to part with all that they had, to obtain this choicest gift of God. These words must be the clearest and the deepest on this subject. If we would get a correct idea of the influence of the incoming of the Holy Ghost into any heart, we must turn to His words and hear what He led His disciples to expect. And this is the outline of His teaching:—He is freely given (Luke xi., 13) to the obedient (John xiv., 15, 16) who wait to receive Him (Luke xxiv., 49), and who have known something of His influence before (John xiv., 17). It is more important to have the Holy Ghost than to have the presence and companionship of Christ in the flesh (John xvi., 7). He will be **ANOTHER** Comforter (John xiv., 16) to us; that is, just what Christ was to His disciples. And also He will be the Spirit of Truth, who will make and keep us true, within and without. He will take possession of mind and voice (Matt. x., 20), giving irresistible power in word (Luke xxi., 15), which shall convict others (John xvi., 8). He will give all teaching on divine things (John xiv., 26), and specially reveal Christ (xv., 26), and keep His former instruction always fresh (John xiv., 26). Just when your need comes you shall have the supply (Luke xii., 12), which shall be always fresh and abundant (John vii., 38, 39) and permanent (John xiv., 16). And receiving Him gives one power to speak forgiveness to sin-laden souls (John xx., 22, 23), and to do greater works even than Christ Himself (John xiv., 12). With the hope and

expectation of such a blessing before them, little wonder that these disciples were prepared to wait until they received. What cause for wonder there is that though this promise of the Father can still be obtained by any believing soul, so few seek and obtain. Yet so it is! Shall it be so any longer in my case?

All these promises are summed up in three names which are given to this blessing at the beginning of the Acts. It is called—

1.—A Baptism, *i.e.*, a washing (Acts i., 5), which gives a clean heart. It is contrasted here, and in the other four places (Matt. iii., 11., Mark i., 8., Luke iii., 16, John i., 33) in which this promise is given, with the Baptism of John. John's baptism cleansed only the outer man and his outer life. This baptism makes the inner man clean, and the inner life holy, by cleansing away heart-sin.

2.—It is called an Enduement (Acts i., 8), which brings power for service; so that the word of the Lord in our mouths is as a hammer that breaks hearts, and as a fire that melts them. It brings grace to uplift the cross of Jesus—

Till its drawing power is felt,
And ten thousands of poor sinners
At His footstool shall have knelt.

3.—It is called a Filling (Acts ii., 4), which results in self being dethroned, and Christ taking its place. Christ takes the whole being under His control, and from the throne of the heart rules over the will, the mind, the desires, the affections, the motives, and the passions. God is within the man,

and he dwells in God. He has conscious fellowship with the living Triune God. He experiences the constraining power of divine love. He rejoices with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. He has a peace that passes understanding. And his fiery zeal constrains him at all times to seek and to save the lost.

Such is the blessing offered to all. God's desire and counsel and command to us is to enter in and to possess all this glorious inheritance. Shall I obey?

CHAPTER V.

SHALL WE SEEK OR NOT?

Thus the disciples knew the promises, and understood them enough to know that God would give them an inestimable blessing on certain conditions. They must have understood also that, whereas in former times God had chosen out certain men and filled them with the Holy Ghost, now He was preparing to pour out His Spirit on all flesh; and that whosoever wished might come and share in the outpouring. How many Christians now have got just as far as that! By Bible study, sermons, reading, and from the testimony of others, they clearly understand

that God is willing to pour out His Spirit upon them. They know also that now is the Dispensation of the Holy Ghost. And it may be they have understood all that for some time. But they have not yet apprehended this gift for themselves. Perhaps they have in some measure sought it. But they have not sought it with all their hearts, or most certainly they would have found. And so they are still without that which would make their lives holy, joyous, and powerful for the Lord and man. Is this the condition of my soul?

This was the condition of the disciples just after the Ascension. There were above 500 of them (1 Cor. xv., 6). These were all "brethren." They had been born again into the family of the Lord Jesus. They were not of the world, for the world was not to see (John xiv., 19) the Lord Jesus after His resurrection. They all had heard that last command from the Lord Himself, "Tarry ye at Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." Surely they will obey it! Surely they will let nothing hinder them from receiving the fulness of the Holy Ghost! Surely, with such a prize in view, they will gladly lay aside all else for a while, in order to seek according to the Lord's command.

So we might have thought. But, sad to say, only a small minority of 120 (Acts i., 15) stayed in Jerusalem to obey that last command. Where had the rest gone? Doubtless back to their own homes to live quiet, peaceful, Christian lives, as many do now; thinking of the Lord, loving Him, and talking of Him to others; perhaps actively working for Him. But they had

NOT RECEIVED THE POWER!

And probably, as they were disobeying God in not tarrying, they never would receive it now.

Doubtless they had what they thought good excuses for not obeying God. The home concerns of one, and the business of another, required their presence. One did not see why he could not receive God's great gift anywhere, without tarrying in Jerusalem. Another could not bear the scorn that he would be subjected to if he were thus to obey the extraordinary command of a crucified man. Another might say, "I am saved, and I know the sort of life Christ wants me to live. What lack I yet?" And if the heart of another had been known, you would have seen that he did not want to be so out-and-out a Christian as he knew this fiery baptism would make him. So, soothing their consciences by such feeble excuses, they did not tarry for the Holy Ghost as they were commanded. Excuses are still easy to find.

But do they really excuse you from waiting for the promise of the Father, and being baptised with the Holy Ghost? What can excuse your being joyless, when you might be exultant? unclean, when you might be clean? cold in heart, when you might be full and overflowing with love and zeal? weak, when you might be mighty—yes, one of the valiant ones of the cross? Some of us have been long enough in company with those 380 disciples who did not seek the baptism. Let us shake off the past, with its failures and sins that cling to us and clog us in pressing forward in the future! Let us arise with holy determination! Let us prove God! Let us see whether there be any Holy Ghost or not! Cost what

it may—suffering, ignominy, death—we must, we will,
be men and women

FULL OF THE HOLY GHOST.

CHAPTER VI.

WAITING.

ONE quarter of the whole number of disciples were prepared to believe their Lord, and to seek until they had obtained what He promised. Let us be amongst their number, and join them in their search, and in the blessing obtained. Let us learn from them what real “waiting upon the Lord” is.

They return to Jerusalem (Luke xxiv., 52), although that city had crucified their Lord, and might do so to them. Yet, in confident expectation of what the Lord is about to do, they enter, not in fear of the Jews or in sorrow for their departed Lord, but with “great joy.” If we have really in faith grasped the promise of the Father, we too shall begin to wait upon Him in joyous, confident expectation of what He is about to do.

They meet together in the upper room. Their Lord is not amongst them as He used to be. But the ascension scene is still in their hearts. They now know Jesus as the Exalted One. They realise that He has taken His seat at the right hand of God. They know that He is there as their great High

Priest, to plead for them to the Father. For the first time they are praying in His name. And they have confident faith that, whatever they ask in that name, they will receive (John xiv., 13).

Do we thus know our Lord as the ascended one, to whom all power is given? Only when we do shall we obtain the Holy Ghost. Just as it is only as we know Christ crucified that our sins are pardoned, only as we know Christ risen do we walk in resurrection power and life; only as we know Christ ascended do we receive the Holy Ghost (Acts ii., 33, Ps. lxxviii., 18). Knowing thus that their Brother, their Master, their Saviour, was at the right hand of power, they meet together. They had only one aim—to obtain this baptism. Nothing less would satisfy them. Let nothing less satisfy us. We meet together and enjoy communion with the saints, and deepen our knowledge of the Bible. But let us not be satisfied with this, or with anything less than what God means by a Baptism of the Holy Ghost. Only those who have this before them, in this manner, will obtain Him.

But many are willing thus to wait before the Lord in a spirit of utter consecration, to seek, and at all costs to find this blessing. For assuredly it will cost us something. Though the Spirit is the free gift of God, we shall not receive Him until the hindrances within have been put away. And often this means bitter spiritual suffering, and a real fellowship with Christ in the experience of Gethsemane. But if we see the deep importance of obtaining this promise, we shall be willing to purge ourselves, “by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning” (Is. iv., 4),

from all sin (2 Cor. vii., 1). Even though that sin may be as precious and as important to us as a right hand or a right eye, we shall cast it from us if it is hindering us from becoming partakers of the Holy Ghost. We shall be willing for the suffering, because we know the glory shall follow within our souls.

But those who thus are consecrated will also look on into the future, and be willing to do His will at all times and in all circumstances. The disciples were willing for this. They realised that the affairs of the Kingdom of Heaven were in their hands, and that they were responsible for its extension (Acts i., 8). They were prepared to spend their lives in the salvation of sinners and in bearing the cross before the world. We see this, because even whilst waiting on the Lord they fill up the gap in the ranks of the apostles caused by the fall of one, and thus are ready to begin their work when the Spirit is given. Is my life thus yielded to God for Him to use in the salvation of the world? It is only such who receive. The fulness of the Holy Ghost is not given merely that we may have happy and comfortable feelings, or live in a spiritually exultant state of mind. He is given only that we may be strong to bear the cross before men, and live for Christ instead of ourselves. Who, then, is willing to consecrate his service thus fully and utterly to his Lord? But, more than this, let us seek in a spirit of self-abasement and repentance for the past sin, and weakness, and failure. Whilst we have been sleeping others have been passing on to hell. There are some whom we might have warned, but had not the courage to do so (Ezek. xxxiii., 6), and their blood is required of us. There are some whom

we have warned in a feeble way that has not resulted in their turning (Jer. xxiii., 22) from sin to God. We have often had no joy in the Lord, no love for Him and for souls, and trouble and conflict instead of peace in our hearts. If we would come to the Lord, seeking the fulness of the Holy Ghost, we must come confessing these sins of our Christian life, and with hearty repentance, that claims grace never to fall into them again. And so they began to seek.

No doubt they would meet together in a very simple manner. Their meetings would doubtless consist chiefly in prayer (Acts i., 14), in leading which both the men and the women joined. They evidently talked over the Scriptures a good deal, and naturally turned to the passages that prophesied of Christ's Resurrection and Ascension, and of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. We see from Peter's address, in chapter ii., that these were much on his mind, so that probably they had been the theme of conversation. Besides this, they would be sure to speak of Christ's promises of the Holy Ghost, which had caused them to come together. We know that they were used to hymn singing (Matt. xxvi., 30) when they met together, and we may be sure that they did not omit that practice now. A time of spiritual refreshing in the Church has always been accompanied by an outburst of new songs unto the Lord. So they may have composed and sung special hymns pleading for the Holy Ghost.

Thus, moved by the same spirit of prayer and praise as we are, would they wait for the coming of the Comforter? And all this time they were united together in bonds of accord (Acts i., 14, ii., 1), and

union, and love. They were of one heart and of one soul in seeking this blessing. They were all desperately in earnest about it. There were no divisions, no doubts, or fears amongst two or three disciples, no cold-heartedness in others. These would most assuredly have hindered the full manifestation of the Holy Ghost. They were "dwelling together in unity," so amongst them "the Lord commanded the blessing." From the head of their High Priest flowed down the holy oil to them who were at the "skirts of His garment" (compare Luke viii., 44, and Ps. cxxxiii.), and the dew of the Holy Ghost rested blessedly upon their souls.

And so the days went by. Each morning, in joyful hope, they would expect the outpouring on that day. And yet days went by and they had received nothing. In their faith and eagerness it is likely that they followed Christ's example, and spent one or two of the nights, as well as days, in prayer. But some days had passed, and nothing had as yet resulted. Were they disappointed? No; God was trying their faith, and proving that it was pure. He still very often deals with seeking souls in the same way. He seems to be turning a deaf ear to them, as He did to the Syro-Phœnician woman, when He is only testing their desire and their faith. Here it is that many seeking souls turn back. Their faith and longing have failed because God has kept them waiting a day or two. And too often they take back the untrue report, "There is no baptism to be had. God does not mean us to think there is."

But let us remember that the time of seeking is sure to be a time of trial. Satan is all alive to the

tremendous power that a Spirit-baptised soul has against him and his kingdom. He will do his best to hinder a seeking soul from finding the Spirit by subtle temptations whilst waiting upon God. Unless we understand his devices, we have no hope of receiving the Spirit. Doubtless he tempted these waiting disciples just as he does us now. And so, after a few days' waiting, he suggested to the thoughts of one, "I have done all I could; I must not force God. Had I not better go home now, and let Him bestow this in His own good time?"

To another he would suggest doubts whether, after all, the Comforter would be given him.

To another he would suggest, "Is it not time to exercise accepting faith? Shall I believe that I have received, and so go home?"

And as their feelings were naturally stirred from so many meetings, and they would feel nearer to God than they had before, he might have suggested, "This stirring of our feelings is the baptism promised. There is nothing more."

But the disciples knew God would abundantly make good His promise. As yet they had received nothing that could be what God meant by a Baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Have you?

In these temptations they were more than conquerors. It was true they were kept waiting longer than they expected. But, though the vision tarried, they would wait for it (Hab. ii., 3). They were dead in earnest. They would hold on until they received. Their hearts craved the fulness, and each day brought them nearer the glorious outpour-

ing, and each prayer in faith brought the fulness nearer to them.

CHAPTER VII.

RECEIVING.

THE tenth day was the Feast of Pentecost. The return of this great annual feast would stir the heart of every Jew, and make him feel the influence of its spirit. Thus the return of Christmas or Easter influences our hearts. The waiting disciples were no exception to this. If we would understand their state of mind just before receiving the Comforter, we must see what were the main ideas connected with the feast. And if we would share in the outpouring of the Spirit, we must share in the spirit of the Jewish Feast of Pentecost.

From Deut. xvi., 10-12, we can gather the feelings that would stir the heart of every pious Jew on that day.

In the first place each worshipper was to bring "a freewill offering," which he was to give to the Lord his God. The Pentecost of the Holy Ghost demands this also. Unless there is a freewill offering of one's whole self, we shall not experience the feast. How easy it is to piously sing songs of full surrender to God! And yet how few of those who thus sing

really do make a freewill offering to their God. Those who do are henceforth not their own. They are going to listen for God's voice continually, and do His will at all costs. Their lives will be given for the salvation of others from the power of Satan. They are going to be as fruitful as possible unto their Lord. Can I make a freewill offering of myself to the Lord in this manner? Well may I do so! He has redeemed me with His precious blood! I will lay my redeemed life at His feet for Him to use as He sees best.

Secondly, but such consecration is not to be made in a spirit of hard sacrifice, but of joyful surrender. "Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God." If we believe God, we must rejoice; for we know that He will fulfil to us His promise of the Spirit. If we love God, we must rejoice to be His more truly, and to be brought into closer fellowship with Him. The disciples sought for the Spirit with great joy (Luke xxiv., 52). Let seeking disciples now take care not to fail in this.

Thirdly, this must be coupled with love towards others. "Thou, and thy servant, the Levite, and the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow," were all to be drawn together to keep the feast. If you are making the sacrifice of yourself to God, take care that you are at peace with all men (Matt. v., 24). And more, let us have the spirit of love that would, if possible, draw all men to serve and worship our God with us. For only to him that hath shall more be given. Only he who has love will receive the abundant fulness of the Holy Spirit of love.

Lastly, the Spirit of this feast was one of

humility. They remembered that they had been nothing but "bondmen in Egypt." They knew that it was by His grace alone that they were what they were, and that all God was giving them was undeserved on their part. Do we realise this? The one who feels himself good enough to be filled with the Spirit is not yet humbled as he must be in order to be blest. But he who humbly acknowledges that he deserves in himself nothing but hell-fire, and that whatever he does receive is by the free mercy of God, is in a position to be baptised with the Holy Ghost. May God find us thus.

This Spirit of the feast was filling the hearts of the disciples. They must have met early on that morning, for a good deal happened by 9 o'clock (chap. ii., 15). They were all with one accord in one place, sitting, with expectant hearts, waiting the coming Comforter. The Lord whom they sought did not disappoint them. They were ready for Him, and He was ready for them. Suddenly the rushing of a mighty wind was heard. The house was peculiarly filled with the power and presence of God. They were all awed and thrilled as they felt God drawing near. He was manifesting Himself in the exceeding greatness of His power. They were feeling the inexpressible calm and the unspeakable joy of being face to face with Him. They now knew His majesty. They felt His stirring force. But the great strong wind (1 Kings xix., 11) of His power was not the Baptism of the Holy Ghost to them.

Let us not be mistaken for ourselves. We may at times have felt the presence and power of

God Himself in a peculiarly deep and impressive way, and yet not be baptised with the Holy Ghost. It has had no lasting effect on our lives. The feeling of awe and solemnity has gradually faded away. We have been near God, but He has not come as a Refining Fire to abide in our hearts.

Yet that more general manifestation of God's presence may be accompanied by individual baptisms of the Holy Ghost. So it was here. Each one of them personally received a distinct tongue of fire. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost." The Comforter had come! God had fulfilled His Word! All their hopes were gloriously realised! All their prayers were abundantly answered! Their hearts were fully satisfied. God had manifested Himself to them. They felt they knew Him so nearly, and so personally, that they could not but call Him Father. (Gal. iv., 6). They knew Christ far more really than they had known Him when with them in the flesh. The light so filled their hearts and minds that they began to understand His love to them, His teaching, and what He had done for them. And as they fully realised these things, they could not but speak out aloud the wonderful works of God (ver. 11). So is every one that is full of the Holy Ghost.

The tongue of fire is the symbol of aggressive, conquering Christianity. Where that which is signified by this is absent, there real Christianity is absent. Where a Christian has received this, he must praise the Lord aloud (ver. 11). He cannot be silent, for the word of the Lord is as a fire in his bones (Jer. xx., 9). He has the sharp sword (Rev. xix., 15), which penetrates the hearts of men

by living words, melting even as it pierces. His words are words of fire (Jer. v., 14), which devour his hearers, so that they must either be melted, or hate and attack him. Of old, the way to the Tree of Life had been closed by a flaming sword, turning every way (Gen. iii., 24), in the hands of God's servants. Now, the tongue of fire was to open out the way whereby every sinner might be brought to the cross, the Gospel Tree of Life.

But the Baptism of Fire brings not only power, but love. Divine Fire is nothing else than pure Love. This baptism opens one's eyes to see the lost, perishing condition of unsaved souls, and fills one's heart with love that constrains one to go and seek to save them. And this love will be victorious. For love is the power that melts the hearts of men. Love alone can draw sinners to Him against whom they have sinned. Love alone can show them something of God in this world. If we would be fishers of men, our hearts must thus be filled with this pure, glowing, divine fire of love.

And we may be filled! The Holy One of Israel does come with fire to our hearts even now! The way He dealt with these early disciples proves that He has power to turn poor sinners into flames of fire (Heb. i., 7) by the Holy Ghost. The Baptism of Fire may be an accomplished fact in our experience, and not merely the theme of an oft-repeated but unanswered prayer.

Have I had a personal Pentecost? Is the fire really kindled in my soul? Does it constrain me with love to dying, perishing souls? Have I this heart-likeness to Christ? Hallelujah! if Christ has

thus baptised me! But if not, TARRY, and ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SPIRIT OFFERED TO ALL.

THERE are always two classes amongst those who witness the effects upon others of a Baptism of the Holy Ghost. Some will honestly but wonderingly ask, "What meaneth this?" (Acts ii., 12), and will humbly seek to understand the cause. Others will not be inclined to believe in the mighty working of the Living God in this age; and will easily suggest a natural cause for the extraordinary effects (ver. 13). If a man is full of the Holy Ghost, they will ascribe his power in preaching to intellectual ability, and his fire to natural zeal, and his deep longing for the salvation of others to the school of thought in which he has lived. But let us have eyes to recognise the Holy Ghost. These other things are good, but the Holy Ghost gives a power, and a fire, and a discernment that other things can never pretend to give.

Peter hears what is being said, and it stirs him up. He rises to speak in all the glow of a fresh Baptism of the Holy Ghost. His words are full of power. The mystery of God's will has been made known to him, and he sees that this gift of the Spirit

is for all. He proves this with such authority, and shows them the way to obtain Him with such clearness, that this chapter is the best guide-book to souls seeking to be endued with spiritual power. Let us stand with these Jerusalem people, and listen to what he has to say to us.

That little Church of 120 men and women, full of the Holy Ghost, forms the text of his address. The sight of them prepares the hearts of the hearers to hear his word. Such a Church now is the most melting and convincing argument to others, that God still can indwell and possess the hearts of men.

He begins by saying that the blessing they have received is nothing more than might have been expected from God's promises. He had promised, "In the last days I will pour out my Spirit." Now He had accomplished it. A new dispensation had begun, and Pentecost was a specimen of how mightily God was going to work in it. God never limited the outpouring of the Spirit to one day. He promised that He should be poured forth "in those days," that is, on many days. Pentecost is one of many such days that God has given, and will give.

Of every such outpouring there will be six results (ver. 17-21):—

(1).—Men and women shall be inspired by the Holy Ghost to preach, and to praise, and to pray.

(2).—Others shall have such a spirit of revelation (Eph. i., 17) that they will see visions of God (Ezek. i., 1) and of the spiritual world.

(3).—Others shall be warned by God in dreams of things not seen as yet.

(4).—All who are consecrated (Acts ii., 18) to

serve God shall receive the enduement of power for such service.

(5).—Wonders and signs (ver. 19, 20) shall be done. The Blood of Christ, the Fire of the Spirit, the smoke of God's presence, shall be manifested.

(6).—Salvation will be brought wonderfully near to sinners (ver. 21).

But how could such a promise be fulfilled? How can the Holy Spirit of the living God dwell in defiled hearts, and hold fellowship with men who are at enmity against God? Before this could come to pass, justice must be satisfied, and hearts must be changed. Yet God has undertaken to do this. He has prepared the way, in order that He may fulfil His promise of the Holy Ghost. The Son of God has satisfied justice by His blood, and by its power can also change hearts. He has made the course down which the living waters can flow to a barren world. His life (ver. 22), crucifixion (23), and resurrection (24-32), have made it possible for God to look with favour upon sinners. The blood shed has prepared the way for the Spirit to inhabit the hearts of men. Has it done so in your heart? Unless we have personally experienced the power of the blood to cleanse, and bring us near to God, we cannot know the Holy Ghost as personally indwelling the heart.

So all hindrances are put away. But will God go further than this, and really bestow the priceless gift of the Holy Ghost? Do we need a proof that He is willing? The ascension of Christ is given to us. This is proof enough! He whom they knew as Jesus of Nazareth has been exalted with great

power as the King of Glory (ver. 33). He who promised to send the Spirit to His disciples, and bade them expect Him, has received that gift to bestow on whomsoever He will. The outpouring on the day of Pentecost proves that He is exalted there. And if He is on the throne of God, it must be God's purpose that all should worship Him, and so share in the fulness of grace He pours out upon His own people.

Little wonder that these people were convicted. They saw how they had opposed God's purposes of wonderful grace. They understood that God had had it in His heart to bless them, and had done His best to carry out His intentions, but that they had directly opposed Him. They saw the blessing that might have been theirs, had not their unbelief and sin hindered it. They saw how they had wronged the deep, self-sacrificing love of God. Was there any hope for them? Would God forgive such hardness of heart? Could they regain the blessing they had opposed and forfeited? No wonder that, seeing in some measure their sin and their position before God, they cried out, "What shall we do?"

Well might we also cry out, convicted of sin as they were. Have not God's purposes of grace been the same to us as to them? Has He not done the work at Calvary to enable Him to carry out His purposes to us also? The blood shed has made it possible for Him to walk in us, and dwell in us. But we have hindered Him doing that. The sin we have loved or allowed; unbelief, the world, or the flesh, have prevented the accomplishment of the desires of His heart. He would let no consideration on His

side hinder those purposes. He emptied heaven of its treasure. He sacrificed His Son. But we ourselves have prevented God from blessing us as He wanted to.

“What shall we do?” May we still inherit the blessing? Is there any hope? Yes! God’s long-suffering is not yet exhausted! Even we may receive “remission of these sins,” and also “the gift of” the same filling by “the Holy Ghost” (ver. 38) that Peter and the others had just received. He offered that, then and there, to “every one” of those Jerusalem sinners. Assuredly, then, may every reader know that God offers it now to him. For the promise is to us who are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God calls (ver. 39).

May our faith grasp this glorious reality! The filling is within our reach! No matter what our past has been, we can now, if we will, obtain the Pentecostal blessing. The promise of the Father is still, by infinite grace, open to us! These are the simple terms: “Repent, and be baptised in the name of Jesus.” Repentance implies turning from all the sin, and doubt, and fear that we have allowed in the past. It means ending the old life, and beginning a new life by the power of God.

And baptism, to us who have passed through the outward form, implies dying to sin and walking henceforth in newness of life by resurrection power.

The gift is offered to me! Well may I separate myself from all who are walking crookedly (ver. 40), and will not receive the fulness God means for them. Do I really die unto sin? Is my repentance thorough?

I believe my past is cleansed by the blood. I gladly receive His sure word. In spite of past failure, fault, and fear, I take the gift in faith. The Holy Ghost is mine, and I am His! Amen. Hallelujah!

CHAPTER IX.

CHRISTIAN LIFE IN SPIRITUAL POWER.

THE results of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost will be very manifest in the private and public life of those who have received it. There will be no doubt in the minds of Christians who live with them that sin is dethroned in them, and Christ has taken its place. Thus, in these early disciples, the fruits of the Holy Ghost were manifested at once. Their ordinary life was one of joyful holiness and power.

The Spirit works now, much as He did then. So the life of a Spirit-filled man or woman now bears a close resemblance to that that we read of them in Acts. ii., 44-47.

“All that believed were together.” The Spirit brings wonderful union and fellowship with others. Minor differences are forgotten. There is lowliness, and mutual forbearance, and peace. Hearts occupied by the same Spirit cannot help being closely

bound together. Those who are purified from sin, and full of love by the Spirit, experience no petty rubs and annoyances from others.

And, moreover, "they had all things common." The Holy Ghost saves men altogether from selfishness and covetousness. Such rejoice to be able to help others with their property; and gladly allow others to use it just as if it were their own. Yes, they would "sell their possessions and goods" if they could thereby supply the wants of others. And if they possess things that others need more than they do, they gladly deny themselves, and give them to them.

Such is the deep, warm, practical love towards others with which the Holy Ghost still can fill the heart. This love does not seek her own, is not provoked, and thinks no evil. It makes every man seek not his own good, but that of others. It makes him glad to spend and be spent, so as to benefit them. Where shall we find such love? Wherever there is anyone full of the Holy Ghost.

Thus, by the Spirit, men and women love others as themselves. Moreover, they love God with all their heart. They love to draw near to Him. They hunger to know more of His truth. Prayer and praise are their great delights. And so, every day, these Christians met in the public services in the Temple, and the more private meetings at each other's houses; for meetings are no longer a drudgery, but a delight, to those full of the Spirit. They glory in any opportunities of grace and blessing.

But there is no gloom or darkness about them.

All is brightness and "gladness" (ver. 46). The Spirit fills them with joy (Rom. xv., 13), that is full and that continues (John xv., 11). They can rejoice evermore, even in tribulation (2 Cor. vii., 4). And at times their joy is unspeakable and full of glory.

And thus they will continue full of light, because the Spirit keeps their hearts single (ver. 46). They can whole-heartedly live for God. Their life is no longer a divided one. Their all is upon the altar for God, and by the Spirit they have no inclination to take it back. Their minds are set upon only one thing—to fully know Christ. Their lives have only one object—the glory of God by the salvation of sinners.

These are the lives that praise God (ver. 47). From them there continually rises to heaven an incense of praise that is a sweet savour to God. On earth others glorify God because of them. "They have favour with all the people." Even sinners admire such lives. They can appreciate their love, and joy, and peace, and power. It makes them long for the same blessing, which is so different to their experience. So, when these Christians speak to them, and in the name of Christ offer them the same salvation, they gladly accept. They are born again of the Spirit. And thus the Lord adds to the Church continually such as should be saved.

The same Spirit abides and works in us. May we allow Him to live His life from us, without diminution or hindrance. May He work in us, not according to our feeble faith, and interpretation of His promises, but according to the riches of His grace, and the exceeding greatness of His power. Thus

shall He be satisfied in us, and we shall be satisfied in God. Thus shall we have power to extend His kingdom. And thus shall we know even now a fore-taste of the fulfilment of the promise :—

THE TABERNACLE OF GOD IS WITH MEN,
AND HE WILL DWELL WITH THEM,
AND THEY SHALL BE HIS PEOPLE,
AND GOD HIMSELF SHALL BE WITH THEM,
AND BE THEIR GOD.

