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THE SPIRIT IN OUR CHURCHES.*

REV. BENJAMIN W. DAY.

Is there anything of such vital importance to the peace and prosperity of our Churches as the presence and power of the Spirit in their midst? Christians are God's witnesses, lights in a world of darkness and sin, watchmen to warn men of danger and point out the way whereby they can flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold upon the hope set before them in the gospel.

The power to be true witnesses, to shine forth as bright lights, is of God and not of man. We can do nothing of ourselves, but are weak, helpless, and dismayed; while with Jehovah on our side we can do all things, and are more than conquerors over every opposing force.

This divine power working in us and through us is not only needed, but is also promised, and has been poured out. The Lord Jesus, at the day of Pentecost, shed forth His gracious influences upon the primitive Church; and this was given, not as a mere transitory effusion, but as a permanent force, to abide with her for ever, and constitute her real glory and strength.

It is true that in some of its manifestations it seems to belong specially to the Apostolic age. We see no more the outward sign of cloven tongues like as of fire, abiding on the heads of believers; nor do we enjoy the miraculous gift of speaking in other languages than our own the wonderful works of God. These gifts have long since passed away, but not so the convincing, converting power of speaking God's words, and sending it home to the hearts of men, in a way that they can neither gainsay nor resist. This abides in all its strength, and can be wielded by every one who sincerely longs for it, and whose heart and soul is prepared for its reception. In proof of this let us look at the way in which the Spirit was first poured out.

It was on one of the great annual feast days, the day of Pentecost, that Jesus fulfilled his promise and sent down the Spirit with its life-giving power on the Church. Christ the passover had been already sacrificed for them, his blood sprinkled upon their hearts and consciences, and complete deliverance vouchsafed from the bondage of corruption and the ceremonies of the law. The Apostles and brethren who then constituted the Church were free men, who rejoiced in their freedom; but, like the Jews after their coming out of Egypt, they were very weak and ignorant. They needed the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus to be more fully revealed, and some public acknowledgment of being called of God to the great work of proclaiming abroad the truths of the gospel. In harmony with this, the command had been given, "Tarry yet at Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." Not long did they have to wait, but

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