

The Believer's Possession of the Spirit.

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1 Cor. 3:16. Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?

1 Cor. 6:19. Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have from God?

What a deplorable ignorance of Christian truth that twice repeated question suggests. Apparently the Corinthians never had been fully conscious or else they had forgotten the relation in which they stood to the Holy Spirit. Of that relationship, of the heritage into which they had entered, of the possession that was theirs, twice over by his "Know ye not," Paul felt it needful to remind them.

So for purposes of instruction or calling to remembrance our speaking at this time will dedicate itself to the relation of the Holy Spirit to the believer. And without further preliminary what is that relation but an actual, present possession of the Spirit by every believer. One's already possession of the Spirit is not a future blessing for which we must wait with uplifted gaze, but a blessing belonging to the present, enriching the believer in the life that now is. There was a time when "the Spirit was not yet given"; a time when the Spirit was resident with the Father, with angels and archangels, with the burning ones in glory, but not among men as Christ was when He lived in Palestine. But that day has gone and ours is the age of the Spirit's indwelling in the believer. As at the nativity Jesus took up His residence among men, so at Pentecost the Spirit began His residence on earth. As the Word of God became incarnate by union with a human body, born of the Virgin Mary, so in a sense the Holy Ghost became incarnate at Pentecost, uniting Himself with the human bodies of men and women who believed on Him. From that day to this it has so continued. The Spirit has dwelt in the church, as the body of Christ, by dwelling in each individual who is a real member of that Body.

"For God is never so far off
As even to be near,
He is within. Our spirit is
The home he holds most dear.

"To think of Him as by our side
Is almost as untrue
As to remove His shine beyond
Those skies of starry blue.

"So all the while I thought myself
Homeless, forlorn and weary,
Missing my joy, I walked the earth,
Myself God's sanctuary."

Our purpose at this time is to turn over the pages of the Word of God for light upon "The Believer's Possession of the Spirit.

I. The believer's possession of the Holy Spirit is argued from negative statements in Scripture. By negative statements Scripture makes it as clear as the sun in an unclouded blue that one cannot be a Christian and be without the Holy Spirit. Possession of Christ involves possession of the Spirit, and absence of the Spirit implies absence of Jesus Christ. Writing to the Romans, Paul declared, "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His," while in his first letter to the Corinthians we find him writing, "Wherefore I give you to understand that no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit." Harkening to those illuminating words how meaningless sounds the exhortation that calls upon the believer to seek, as for an unknown blessing, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit one may not say "Jesus is Lord." To a mechanical, physical utterance of that statement any one will find himself equal. But to make it more than a physical statement, to turn the outward profession into a conviction that forges the heart, in the presence of Jesus to exclaim, "My Lord and my God," there must be an indwelling of the Holy Spirit. One may be a professor of religion, or a member of the church, but one cannot be a disciple of Jesus and not possess the Spirit.

II. Secondly the believer's possession of the Holy Spirit is taught by positive statements in Scripture. Our Lord Himself established this truth by a positive statement. In His memorable farewell message to the disciples He distinctly promised that the Holy Spirit who then dwelt "with" them, should, after being sent from heaven, be "in" them. "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive; for it becometh him not, neither knoweth him: ye know him; for he abideth with you, and shall be in you." And what did Pentecost witness but the fulfilment of that promise when the tongues of fire, which were the visible symbols of the Holy Spirit's descent upon and entrance into the disciples, "sat upon each of them," and they were all without distinction filled with the Holy Ghost? A promise on the lips of Jesus at the instituting of the Supper, the believer's possession of the Spirit at Pentecost became a fact.

Then take the positive statements of the believer's possession of the Spirit as made by Paul. As a spur to faithful fidelity he wrote young Timothy, "That good thing which was committed unto thee guard through the

Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in us." Desirous of inspiring the Romans with the radiant glory of the Christian's future he confronted them with this high piece of logic—"If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies through the Spirit that dwelleth in you." Observing the ignorance or the failure of the Corinthians to lay hold of this vital truth, twice over he put to them the question, "Know ye not that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." "Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have from God?" With such crystal words on his pages is there a possibility of mistaking the Apostle's belief? I tell you nay. As strong as the pealing thunder, as clear as an Alpine bugle note is Paul's avowal of the indwelling of God's spirit in a believer. The Master's promise with the disciples had become an experience. Believe it, fellow disciples, the day of waiting for the Spirit has gone. Pentecost, that day of glory when this lost world was hallowed by the Spirit's entrance, saw its departure. Ours in the day of indwelling and possession, when every believer is a partaker of the Holy Ghost, when the Scriptural description of the third Person of the Godhead is this—"the Spirit that dwelleth in you."

III. But the proof of this cheering truth does not exhaust itself by a presentation of outspoken Scriptural statements whether negative or positive. The doctrine is woven into the warp and woof of all truth, kneaded into and made one with all Scriptural doctrine.

The believer's possession of the Holy Spirit is bound up with his relation to God and to Christ. As a believer or disciple of Jesus Christ what is my relation to God? Harken to the answer of John,—"As many as received Him to them gave he the right to become children of God." And if I am a son of God what then? "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father." Bound up with and inseparable from God's possession of us as children is our possession of the personal Holy Spirit. Sonship with God and possession of the Spirit go together, as light and heat go together in a sunbeam, and wherever there is a looking up to God as Father, there may be a looking within knowing that as sons of God the spirit of God dwells in us. And as relationship with God involves possession of the Spirit so does relationship with Christ. As a believer what is your relation to Jesus Christ? Take the Master's own description—"I in you and ye in me." But by whom save by the indwelling Holy Spirit was this union with Jesus Christ effected? Speaking of the believer's union with his Lord, and doing so under the figure of the body, Paul wrote "by one spirit" "we are all baptized into one body," and is not that equivalent to affirming that whenever one becomes a member of the body of Christ the Holy Spirit in turn becomes a member in the body of that one. "I in you and ye in me." That was the Master's own description of our relationship, and locked in the arms of a living union with Jesus Christ we have passed through the baptism of the Spirit and the Spirit has passed into us. Urge me, therefore, as a believer and disciple to seek the Holy Spirit and by my kinship to God and the exalted Jesus I would answer, "What God hath joined together let not man put asunder." Bound up with his relation to God and to Christ is the believer's possession of the Spirit.

Likewise the believer's possession of the Spirit is argued from his assurance of himself as Christian. You claim to know God. You claim to be in personal, vital relation with Jesus Christ. You claim that the future has for you no terror, no dread on account of sin, nothing but joy unending and life ideal and satisfying to the utmost reach of desire. But what is the basis of your claim? what is the ground of your assurance? Put the question to John or to Paul and what is the answer? "Hereby know we that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are children of God." In the last analysis it is the Spirit of God that banishes doubt and begets assurance. Ability to declare "I know in whom I have believed" comes from His presence as a vital, integral part of the life. Dwelling within us He makes plain to our inner sense the reality and fulness of our reconciliation to God and our adoption to be His children through the merits of Jesus Christ. As all earth's broken lights—a candle here, a lamp there, a fire yonder—flow to us from one great originating centre of solar light and heat, so knowledge of ourselves as Christian flows to us from one great originating, primary source—"Hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He gave us." Wrapped up in His relations to God and to Christ is the believer's possession of the Spirit and his knowledge and recognition of those relations argues for the same great fact.

Once more the believer's possession of the Spirit is argued from his possession of a spiritual life. All spiritual activities, all manifestations of a life that is more than moral and so much more as to be spiritual are proofs of the Holy Spirit's presence. Not seldom these manifestations are sparse and stunted like trees in the far away frigid belt. But wherever there are spiritual manifestations, be they few or frequent, God's Holy Spirit is

present, for who would affirm that spiritual manifestations and activities have any source or are made effective by any equipment other than the indwelling Spirit of God. With Paul's letters before him one would hesitate long before pointing to the Corinthian Christians as models of excellence or examples of a higher life. Yet notwithstanding the low level at which they lived the various "gifts," "administrations" and "operations" manifested in the church were all ascribed to the working of "that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." Enumerating the various gifts that characterized them he summarized it thus, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." In the last analysis all spiritual manifestations index backward and inward to the Spirit. Try it and tell me is it not so. What can you say of the gift of spiritual insight, or of the power to pray, or of a character with Christian graces? Is not every grace that adorns the life, that sweetens the character a fruit of His planting and nurture? Is not every true prayer that we breathe but an echo of His voice who helpeth our infirmities? Is not every glimpse of truths that lightens the life but a sign that we have received not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God?" To turn these pages with reverent hands is to learn that every gift and grace, that all spiritual operations and manifestations in the life of a believer are an undeniable proof and a direct result of the indwelling Holy Spirit. What we are, we are not of ourselves. By the grace of God we are what we are and the grace of God works not through an absentee, not through a Spirit for whom we are compelled to wait or seek but through One who is "closer to us than breathing and nearer than hands and feet."

Further the believer's hope for the future is bound up with and inseparable from his possession of the Spirit. In none of his great letters does Paul discuss 'the immortality of the soul' or give a speculative or metaphysical turn to the question of a life beyond. With him the question of a life beyond was thoroughly experimental and he looked forward with beaming eye to a future of power, of joy, of radiant glory because through the indwellings of God's gracious Spirit the beginnings of such a life were his already. Instead of turning to science or philosophy, ransacking their pages for hints and suggestions on 'the continuity of life' or the immortality of the soul, he turned to a heart, where the Spirit of God was dwelling, and in four of his great letters he makes his possession of the Spirit the basis of his hope for a future life. Whoever forgets those suggestive words—"the earnest of the Spirit?" God gave him the earnest of the Spirit and where there is an earnest, there is more to follow, and more of essentially the same kind, of fuller sweep or larger proportions. God gave him the earnest of the Spirit and upon what he had received in the entrance into his life of the Holy Spirit, he based his hope for the future and apart from his present possessions he had no future hopes. With Paul the indwelling of the Spirit was prophetic, the first-fruits of a ripper, richer harvest, the initial instalment of God's redemption of the entire man, and in view of this doctrine embedded as it is in rock foundation of all Scriptural truth, the exhortation that called upon the believer to seek for God's salvation would be as wise, would it not, as the appeal that urges the believer to seek or to wait or to pray for the Spirit?

And now there are several practical thoughts which this doctrine of our possession of the Spirit should leave with us. One truth which it should write upon our hearts is the needlessness of praying for the Holy Spirit. It is often asked if believers should pray for the Holy Spirit. The only way to arrive at a settlement of the question, as of all others, is to search the Scriptures with candid minds. Opening the New Testament we must examine the recorded prayers and exhortations that came from lips inspired by the Holy Ghost. But to do so is to find that in no single case after Pentecost (with a possible exception) do believers ask nor are they exhorted to ask for the Holy Spirit as a gift not yet received. And why should the believer pray for the Holy Spirit when the Holy Spirit is already his. As well pray for the birth of Jesus or any other event that has already taken place as to pray for the advent of the Spirit. There was a day when the Holy Spirit was not yet given. But that day has passed. The statement of our Lord that the Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him is a promise previous to the Pentecostal descent of the Spirit. It means no doubt that God will never refuse His Spirit to one who sincerely asks for Him. But why do we need to ask for Him when every believer since Pentecost is a temple of the Holy Ghost? Instead of praying for the Holy Spirit, a blessing at present possessed, our wisdom is to pray that the Holy Spirit already dwelling within would carry on His operations and manifest His power. That would be prayer modelled after New Testament prayer. God has given His Spirit to us and New Testament precedent calls upon us to accept as a fact this indwelling of the Spirit and to pray that He will strengthen us with His might in the inner man.

Another truth which the indwelling of the Spirit teaches is the sanctity of the human body. That is pagan and not Christian that belittles or maligns the

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