

increase in numbers, in wealth, in influence, and in everything that is outwardly attractive; but amid it all we may have but little of the Spirit's presence and power. None of these are true tests of spiritual prosperity, but only the working of the Spirit within us, and from us spreading itself abroad throughout the world. The glory of the Church does not consist in her numbers, her wealth, the eloquence and learning of her ministers, or the grandeur or imposing nature of her ceremonies; but in the fact that she is the City of God, the holy place, the tabernacle of the Most High. It is only when God is known in her palaces for a refuge, when the Shekinah rests upon her, that she shines forth in her true beauty and strength.

With this she looks forth as the morning; a morning without clouds and darkness; and appears walking in majesty, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. Should not then every Christian heart be burdened with an earnest longing to see the power of God descend upon us in rich and glorious abundance?

Moreover, never let us be content with the partial influences of the Spirit; but let us aspire to be filled with all the fulness of God; to have our whole nature transformed, and so be made the means of rousing up and quickening into spiritual life those dead in trespasses and sins. The primitive Church was so filled; while believers in all ages have sought and found this glorious gift, this mighty power, this life-giving energy. Is there anything but their own unbelief, their hardness of heart, that prevents every member of Christ's Church from being filled with the Spirit? Ye have not, because ye ask not, or because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it on your lusts. He that believeth, out of him shall flow rivers of living water. All things are ready. The Lord has provided a stream of divine grace; the fountain is opened; the pure river of the water of life flows out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. You are called to this fountain; and with you it rests to drink, and be filled with the Spirit. The Lord waits to be gracious, and is far more willing to bless than we are to ask. He is the same loving, gracious Jehovah that he was in primitive times. We are not straitened in him, but we are straitened in ourselves. Listen to his gracious words: "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." Let us take hold of this "how much more"—and plead it before the throne of grace. Christ declares: "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven."

Can there not be this agreement among us to ask the gift of the Spirit? Why could not we who are the ministers of Christ, meet together from time to time in twos and threes, and have special days of fasting and prayer to obtain power from on high? We need it, our churches need it, and so do the souls of thousands perishing around us. It is by prayer and fasting that this power is brought down; personal, united, earnest, persevering prayer, that will not be denied, but which, taking hold of God's strength, exclaims in the language of the patriarch Jacob: "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." Such prayer is never offered in vain, but must prevail.

The promise abides faithful: "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly; gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders; gather the children, and those that suck the breasts; let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people: Where is their God? Then the Lord will be jealous for his land, and pity his people." "Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord, his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain on the earth."