

~Other Speakers G-L: Aaron Hills:

"Receive ye the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22).

"Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" (Acts 19:2).

"Who have received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 10:47).

"Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. 3:2).

Multitudes Seem not to realize that we are living in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. In the pre-Christian ages men were under the dispensation of the Father: and the duty of man and the test of man was his acknowledgment and worship of the One Only God. This was Abraham's duty and the test of his piety, as it was with Enoch and Abel.

Then came the dispensation of Christ the Son -- "God manifest in the flesh." Then it was the duty and the test of men to receive Jesus, and acknowledge Him as Savior and Lord. This brought life and salvation. But Jesus looked with unutterable sorrow upon the people, and said, "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life."

Then came the present dispensation -- that of the Holy Spirit, who is now the representative and executive of the Godhead. Christians are now born of the Spirit, guided and led by the Spirit, comforted and sanctified and filled and empowered by the Spirit. It is now the duty and the test of men to yield to the Spirit and accept Him as Leader and Guide and Sanctifier and Keeper. We get our present comfort and victory, and our future glorification through Him.

1. -- Note that the Spirit is a Person.

Some have degraded the Spirit to a mere influence. Others have taught that it is another name for the written Word. But nobody can fairly interpret the words of Jesus in the upper chamber about the Holy Spirit, and put with them the things said about Him elsewhere in the Bible, without concluding that He is as truly a person as God the Father, or His only-begotten Son. He has the very same personal attributes as the Father. He is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent: He thinks, feels, and wills; speaks, comforts, guides; inspires, instructs, warns; is grieved, resisted, rejected; strives, helps, intercedes; speaks and hears; is blasphemed and His influence so scorned, and His character so insulted, that He sorrowfully leaves the soul to its eternal doom. He is a person as much as we are, or as God is, if language can have any meaning.

Sinners can have no internal communion or fellowship with Him, or receive or know Him. But He convicts them of sin, striving to lead them to repentance and salvation. Yet He manifests himself to Christians continually, revealing truth and Christ unto them, trying to sanctify them, and empower them for service, and fit them for a glorious heaven.

II. -- He is a Gift.

That means that His work in the Christian's life cannot be earned or procured as a reward of service. He must be served if we are saved: service and salvation are wedded to each other and can never be divorced. Yet the incoming of the Spirit into a Christian's life is so infinitely important, and transcendently precious, that it could by no possibility ever be earned.

Moreover, the Spirit's work in the heart cannot be bought. Simon Magus tried to do it, but was sternly rebuked for it. No person is opulent enough to procure this treasure by any effort of generosity. The poorest can have it; but the richest cannot buy it. The simple reason is, the Spirit is a gift.

Gifts are received, as hungry beggars receive bread; as shivering mendicants receive clothing to cover their nakedness. Hence the texts quoted at the head of this article. Hence Jesus said: "The heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." Hence Peter said: "We are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit whom God hath given to them that obey Him (Luke 11:13 and Acts 5:32).

Please remember, then, that as truly as God gave His Only Son to a world of sinners, so truly has He given, and does give, the Holy Spirit to Christians. We come to God for comfort in sorrow, for healing in sickness, for forgiveness of sin, for cleansing from impurity. But while strength and cleansing are all gifts of God to

believers, the Author of them all is a gift also.

Instead, then, of seeking these gifts in a half-reluctant manner, now and then one, would it not be more in harmony with the plan of God to seek Him? For when the Spirit came to abide in our hearts, He would bring His gifts with Him. It is not only a delight to God, but He even commands us to RECEIVE Him, and "be filled with the Spirit." And it grieves His loving heart when we do not obey. He knows that we lose the most priceless blessing this side of heaven.

III. -- If we receive Him, we must seek Him for His own sake and not for what He gives.

The son of a wealthy father should love him for his own sake, and not for the sake of the wealth he may inherit. To love selfishly is not to love at all. So to seek the Spirit for the gifts, is really seeking the gifts, and not seeking Him at all.

Probably this is one of the chief hindrances in seeking this blessing of holiness. We "ask and receive not, because we ask amiss" -- selfishly for the joy, or the honor, or the fame, or the power, or the reward. God is compelled to withhold the gift for a time until our motives are purified.

A Christian woman sought the baptism with the Spirit for a whole night in prayer, and in the morning was no nearer the blessing than she was the night before. It was suggested to her that she was not seeking the Holy Spirit, but the joy of the Spirit. When she perceived that, she said: "I see my blunder. I have not been seeking Him at all. I have been seeking some manifestation of Him. I receive Him now by faith. I just receive HIM whether I ever have a moment's happiness or not. I will not . question about that, I will just take HIM." And instantly He responded to her loving faith, and gave her, not the joy she was seeking, but His own blessed Self -- a conscious presence in her soul. Of course joy followed later; for the fruits of the Spirit always come when needed.

We know of a minister who sought the Spirit long and earnestly, that he might have power, and be like Finney. He did not get the blessing until years afterward, when he sought in a better way. This may account for the reason that Moody sought so earnestly for three months, and A. B. Earl for five years, before the Spirit came. We may be sure the Spirit had ample reason for His delay. He will not respond to our prayers, until our seeking is for His glory.

It is much to be regretted that some of our holiness evangelists have been betrayed into magnifying and stressing manifestations, and emotions, and gifts, until whole audiences have been turned aside to seeking them instead of Him -- the Holy Spirit. We know of a whole body of students led aside on this false trail by an imperious, dominating will: they sought feelings and ecstasies. The result was the wrecking of the presidency and the ruin of the religious experience of many of the students, from which a large number will never recover. Some lost their sanity, others re-acted into infidelity, and bright lights were put out.

If you are bent on having manifestations, and ecstatic emotions, and physical thrills, you can unfailingly get them without God; for the devil can counterfeit them all, deceiving the very elect. And no sight is more sad than the ultimate wreckage that follows in the wake of such man-made and Satan-inspired enthusiasms. But when the movings of the . sensibilities are Pentecostal and genuine, we bow reverently, and let the Spirit have right of way.

IV. -- How do we receive the Spirit?

(1) By obedience. "God gives the Spirit to them that OBEY Him." He cannot take up His abode with us while there is any insubordination in our hearts. Not until we consent to be and do what He wishes, and let Him have His way with us, can we rationally expect His coming. Obedience comes first.

(2) By faith. "But," said a seeker at the altar to me, "I will not believe that the Spirit comes and sanctifies me until I feel the experience in my heart." Ah, then you will never get it. You could deal with a rogue or villain in that way: and is that all the confidence you have in the Word of the holy God? You must receive the promised Comforter by faith, without feeling or evidence, except God's promise. God will respond to the faith, with the instant gift of the Holy Spirit. Faith first: experience and feeling afterward.

We were told in England of a devout young woman living in New Zealand, whose heart became hungry for God. She wanted to be holy and filled with the Spirit, and knew not how to receive the blessing. She took steamer for London and attended the famous May Meetings, and still was as hungry as ever. They advised her to go to the

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Keswick Convention. She went, and the last meeting of Keswick week left her as unsatisfied as ever, and her heart was nearly broken. That evening she attended a holiness meeting in a little hall, led by Reader Harris, and was sanctified and filled with the Spirit that evening. But, if she had only known it, she could have been spared the long journey to England and back, twenty-five thousand miles, and received the Holy Spirit by faith in her own home in thirty minutes. He was there, and waiting to be received, and He is waiting to be received by every one who reads these lines. Will you, dear reader, have Him now?