

Co-Operating With the Holy Ghost

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of co-operating with the Holy Ghost, receiving Him, being filled with Him, trusting Him, obeying Him, and honoring Him.

Scripture: Joel 2:28-29, John 20:22, Acts 2:4, Acts 4:31, Romans 8:6, 1 Corinthians 12:7, Galatians 3:14, Ephesians 5:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:19, Jude 1:20

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Co-operation with the Holy Spirit"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the necessity of co-operating with the Holy Spirit, highlighting that while the Spirit operates sovereignly, He respects human free will and waits for our invitation to work in our lives. Simpson explains that receiving the Holy Spirit involves an active engagement, akin to consuming nourishment, and that being filled with the Spirit is a continual process of renewal and refreshment. He urges believers to trust, obey, and honor the Holy Spirit, recognizing His gentle guidance and the importance of responding to His voice. The sermon illustrates that our spiritual growth and effectiveness depend on how we utilize the gifts of the Spirit, drawing parallels with biblical parables. Ultimately, Simpson calls for a deeper relationship with the Holy Spirit, encouraging believers to expect His powerful presence in their lives.

Transcript

"Receive ye the Holy Ghost" John xx: 22.

"Be filled with the Spirit." Eph. v: 18.

While we recognize the sovereign power of the Holy Ghost, visiting the heart at His pleasure, and working according to His will upon the objects of His grace, yet God has ordained certain laws of operation and co-operation in connection with the application of redemption; and He Himself most delicately recognizes His own laws, and respects the freedom of the human will; not forcing His blessings upon unwilling hearts, but knocking at the door of our heart, waiting to be recognized and claimed, and then working in the soul as we heartily cooperate, hearken, and obey. There is, therefore, a very solemn and responsible part for every man in co-operating with, or resisting and hindering the Holy Spirit.

"The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal," that is to say, it rests with the man who receives the first movement of the Holy Spirit to determine how far he will embrace his opportunity, co-operate with his heavenly Friend, and enter into all the fullness of the good and perfect will of God.

Perhaps the pound, represented in the parable as given to every one of the servants, was meant to express that gift of the Spirit which every Christian receives, and the various uses which the servants made of this common endowment may represent the degrees with which the children of God double and use their spiritual advantages.

One improved his pound until it had become ten; another until it had increased five-fold, and another neglected it and hid it in the earth. So, three men receiving in the beginning of their experience an equal measure of spiritual things, may show in the end just as great a diversity in the use that they have made of the precious trust. By a diligent and vigilant obedience the one has grown to be a Paul, crowned with ransomed souls, and clothed with all the fullness of heavenly power. The other has become, perhaps, a proud Diotrefes, seeking chiefly his personal ambition and using the divine grace for his own advantage.

The Holy Spirit is especially sensitive to the reception He finds in the human heart; never intruding as an unwelcome guest, but gladly entering every open door, and following up every invitation with His faithful love and power. How are we to co-operate with Him, and how may we grieve and hinder Him?

1. We are commanded to receive the Holy Ghost.

This denotes an active and positive taking of His life and power into our hearts and lives. It is not a mere acquiescence in His coming, or passive assent unto His will, but an active appropriating and absorbing of His blessed person and influences into our whole person. It is one thing to have our dinner brought to us, and it is another thing to eat it, drink it, assimilate it, and be nourished by it.

It is thus that we are to receive the Holy Ghost, with an open, yielding, hungering, thirsting, believing, accepting and absorbing heart, even as the dry sand receives the rain, as the empty sponge receives the moisture, as the negative cloud receives the current from the positive, as the vacuum receives the air, and the babe drinks in the mother's life from her offered breast.

There are spiritual organs of reception as well as physical. There are vessels of heart-hunger and absorption which can be cultivated and exercised, and there are those who, "by reason of us," have their senses thus exercised to receive the grace of God.

Are we receiving the Holy Ghost? are we taking the water of life freely? are we putting forth our hand grasping the tree of life and eating of its fruit?

Let us remember that we are receiving a person, and that in order to do so we must recognize that person individually, and treat Him as we would a welcome guest.

Have we thus received the Holy Spirit as a person, invited Him into our hearts, believed that He really came, and then begun to treat Him as an actual person; to talk to Him, to commune with Him, to enjoy His fellowship, to call upon His help, and practically recognize Him as a present Guest.

Not only do we receive the Holy Spirit as a person, but having thus recognized Him we are to receive His influences as He imparts them, to be open to His touch, attentive to His voice, responsive to His love, and empty vessels for His constant use and filling.

2. We are to be filled with the Spirit.

While it is true that there is a definite moment when the Holy Spirit comes to reside in the heart, yet there are repeated experiences of His renewing, quickening, reviving, refreshing influences; these are called by the apostle, in Jude, "the renewings of the Holy Ghost," which He sheds on us abundantly, and by Peter, in the Acts of the Apostles, "the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." The expression, "baptized of the Spirit" may be applied perhaps to our first marked experience of this kind, and in this connection we are glad that the term baptism means a very thorough and complete immersion in the ocean of His love and fullness. But it is not once that He is asked to manifest His love and power.

We read in the Acts of the Apostles that after the day of Pentecost there came another day when the disciples were assembled in a time of peril and trial in prayer before the Master for His interposition, and that when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they had assembled, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and the mighty power of God was manifested afresh in their midst.

And so the Apostle says in Ephesians, "Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit." The filling of the Spirit is here contrasted with the exciting influence of earthly stimulants, as if he had said, there is one draught of which you can never drink too much; you can safely be intoxicated with the Holy Ghost.

In the twelfth chapter of 1 Cor., Paul uses the same expression in connection with the figure of baptism: "By one Spirit have we all been baptized into one body, and been made to drink of that one Spirit." It is the figure of being submerged in the ocean, and then, when lost in the depths of the sea, opening our mouths and beginning to drink of its depth and fullness. We are plunged in the Holy Spirit until He becomes the element of our being, like the air in which we move, and then we open all the faculties of our being and drink from His inexhaustible supplies.

How great the capacity of the human soul to be filled with the life of God it is impossible to say. Surely, if the sun can fill a flower with its glorious light in all the many-tinted colors; surely, if the cloud can drink in his rays until they grow with all the tints of light, O, surely the human soul can absorb all there is in God and then give it forth in the reflected light of holiness. Surely, if the earth can drink in the rain, and then give it out in the plants, and fruits, and flowers of summer, the human heart can draw from God the elements of His very being, and turn them into all the fruits of holy living and useful deeds. Surely, if His own beloved Son could dwell in His bosom ages upon ages before an angel ever sang or a planet swept along its heavenly way, or an object of creation filled the plains of immensity, and found in His Father's heart the rapture of His joy, so that He could say, "I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him," O, surely, the human soul can fill all its little vessels and satisfy the measure of its capacities in His divine love and benignity.

Let us receive Him in all His fullness, let us be filled with the Spirit, let us drink of the ocean in which we have been baptized. A Christian friend wrote the other day that his old neighbors had got up a report that he had turned out badly in his Christian life and taken to drinking. He replied, very happily, that it was true he had taken to drinking of late, but that if his old friends could only know what he was drinking they they would all join him, for he had found the fountain of living waters, and was drinking from the Holy Spirit and could say, "He that drinketh of this water shall never thirst again."

3. Let us trust the Holy Spirit.

We must believe in the Spirit as well as in the Son, and treat Him with confidence, expecting Him to meet us and bless us, and communicate unto Him all our needs, perplexities, and even our temptations and sins. He was the anti-type of the water of Horeb's ancient rock, and it is as wrong today as it was for

Moses to strike that rock in unbelieving violence, when God bids us simply to speak to it in gentleness and trust, and expect its waters to gush forth at our whispered call and satisfy out every need.

The Holy Spirit is sensitive to our distrust. Many persons cry for Him and pray to Him as though He were a distant and selfish tyrant, insensible to His children's cry. It is a mother heart to whom we speak, and one who is always within whispering distance of her little ones.

Let us nestle beneath her wings, let us walk in the light of her love, let us trust the Holy Ghost with implicit, childlike confidence, and always expect the answering voice and presence of the Comforter, and it shall be true, "Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear." The apostle asks the Galatians, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" and adds after, "we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

This is the only way that we can receive a person-by treating him with confidence, believing that he comes to us in sincerity, and opening the door to him at once, recognize him as a friend, and treat him as a welcome guest. So let us treat the Holy Spirit.

4. Let us obey the Spirit.

The first thing in obedience is to hearken. Especially is this necessary with the gentle Comforter. So gentle is this mother that her voice is not often loud, and may be missed by the inattentive ear; therefore, the beautiful expression is used by the apostle Paul in the 8th chapter of Romans, which reminds us of a mother's voice; "The minding of the Spirit is life and peace." We are to mind the Spirit, we are to pay attention to His counsels, commands, and slightest intimations. God never speaks an idle word, or gives a lesson that we can afford to slight or forget. They who will listen will have much to listen to, but they who slight the voice of God need not wonder that they are often left in silence.

The Spirit's voice is "a still small voice." The heart in which He loves to dwell is a quiet one, where the voice of passion and the world's loud tumult is stilled, and His whisper is watched for with delight and attention.

But not only must we hearken; when we know we must obey. The voice of the Spirit is imperative; there can be no compromise, and there should be no delay. God will not excuse us from His commandments. His word is very deliberately spoken and for our good always, and when the command is given it cannot be recalled. Therefore, if we do not obey we must be involved in darkness, difficulty, and separation from Him. We may plunge on, but the Spirit waits at that point, on the crossroads of life, and we can make no progress until we return and obey Him. Many a bitter experience, many a tear of brokenhearted disappointment and failure have come from refusing to obey. Indeed, such disobedience must be fatal if persisted in. It was just there that Saul halted and lost his kingdom, through disobedience and willfulness in neglecting the voice of God. It was there that Israel found the fatal crisis of their history at Kadesh Barnea. It was there that, in the apostolic days, a nation was about to reap the same fatal error, and the apostle pleaded with his countrymen so solemnly and gently: "Today if ye will hear His voice harden not your hearts."

Happy the heart that promptly obeys the voice of God. The Spirit delights to lead such a soul. How beautifully we see this illustrated in the experience of Paul! At one period of his ministry he was in danger of pressing on in his work beyond the divine command, and so, we are told, he was forbidden of the Spirit to preach the Word in Asia, and essayed to go into Bithynia but the Spirit suffered him not. Happy for him

that he obeyed both these restraints. Had he persisted. in his way, and even succeeded in getting down to Ephesus, he would have found every door closed, and his visit would have been premature. Waiting on God's bidding and way a year longer he was permitted to go afterwards and found the door wide open, and his next and perhaps most successful ministry was given to him at Ephesus, while in obedience, that led him now into Europe, he was permitted to establish the Gospel in that mighty continent.

A little later, we see the very opposite lesson exemplified in his life. We are told that he purposed in Spirit to go to Jerusalem and Rome. This was a personal direction of the Holy Ghost to him, and in consequence he determined upon the greatest purpose of his life, to carry the gospel to his countrymen at Jerusalem, and then to establish Christianity in the capital of the world.

It was well that he proposed it in the Spirit, and that he was sure of God's command, for the difficulties that afterwards met him would have been insuperable on any human line.

First, the very servants of God met him all along the way, and even prophetic messengers warned him not to go to Jerusalem, but the brave apostle kept to his promise and pressed divinely on..

Next, the whole power of unbelieving Judaism arrayed itself against him, tried to mob him at Jerusalem, to assassinate him on the way to Caesarea, and then to condemn him before the tribunal of Felix, Festus and Agrippa, but still he pressed steadfastly on.

Next, the intriguing policy and imperial power of Rome itself confronted him, and held him two years a prisoner at Caesarea, but he never for a moment abandoned his purpose.

At length he was on his way to Rome, but then the very elements of nature and the powers of hell combined in one last effort to destroy him. The fierce Euroclydon of the Mediterranean wrecked his ship, and on Malta's shore the viper from the flames fastened upon his hand, but he still pressed on in indomitable might, in obedience to the Holy Ghost, and so he reached Rome and planted the standard of the cross before the palace of the Caesars, witnessed for Christ in the face of imprisonment and martyrdom, and at last looked down from heaven on the spectacle of Christianity the established religion of the whole "Roman empire three hundred years later.

Thus let us obey the Holy Ghost, whether it be in silence or in activity, and we shall find that if He be to us our Wonderful Counsellor, He shall certainly prove our mighty God.

5. Let us honor the Holy Ghost.

Less than any other person does He honor Himself. His constant business is to exalt Christ and hide behind His person. Therefore, the Father is pleased when we exalt and honor Him, and He Himself will especially use the instrument which gives Him the glory. "Honor the Holy Ghost and He will honor you," was the counsel of an aged Christian patriarch who had seen many a mighty awakening in the church of God.

It is indeed true and specially important in this material and rationalistic age, when even the ministers of Christ sometimes seem to wish to eliminate the supernatural from the Scriptures and the church, and find any other explanation than the power of God for His supernatural working.

The special dispensation of the Holy Ghost is drawing to its close. We may therefore expect that He will manifest His power in unusual methods and degrees as the age draws to its close.

Let us understand Him and be in sympathy with His divine thought, and ready to follow His wise and mighty leadership unto the last campaign of Christianity. Why should we ever be looking back to Pentecost? Why should we not expect His mightiest triumphs in the immediate future, and, as Joel has prophesied, "before the great and terrible day of the Lord."

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