

(Power From on High) 12. the Holy Spirit in the Body of Christ

by A.B. Simpson

The Holy Ghost constitutes, sustains, and unites the body of Christ, and endues and enables it for its various ministries.

Scripture: Acts 1:8, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Ephesians 4:4

Topics: "The Holy Spirit", "Unity in the Body of Christ"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the vital role of the Holy Spirit in the Body of Christ, explaining that the church is not merely an organization but a living entity constituted and sustained by the Holy Ghost. He illustrates how the Holy Spirit baptizes believers into one body, unites them with Christ, and empowers them for ministry. Simpson highlights the necessity of being filled with the Spirit to maintain spiritual life and effectiveness in service, urging believers to recognize their individual roles within the body. He concludes by affirming that every member, regardless of their perceived importance, is essential and endowed by the Holy Spirit for the work of the church.

Transcript

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." 1 Cor. 12: 13.

The whole of this wonderful chapter is devoted to the unfolding of the profound truth that the church is the body of Christ, and that the Holy Ghost is the life of the church, constituting and sustaining its union with Christ, the living Head, and clothing it with divine power and efficiency for its holy ministry.

I. THE HOLY GHOST CONSTITUTES THE BODY OF CHRIST.

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." The church is not an organization. It is an organic life; it is a living body constituted by the Holy Ghost, and united to Jesus Christ, its life and living Head. Eve was created in the person of Adam, at first, and then, afterwards was taken from him by the special act of God, and united to him as his bride. So the Church is taken out of Christ by the Holy Ghost, and then given back to Him in divine union, as His glorious Bride.

Each individual member is thus called and created anew in Christ Jesus and, one by one, the Lord adds to Himself and to His Church such as shall be saved. No other power can constitute a church. Men may be added to organizations, but this does not make them the body of Christ. The union must be vital; the work must be divine. It is called a baptism. This word expresses the deep truth of death and resurrection. It is by the death of our natural life and the resurrection life of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we become incorporated into His glorious body and united with His life as the great Head of the Church.

Everything pertaining to the natural life is incongruous with the true Church of Christ. The greatest curse of the church today is the carnal element that still adheres to it through unsanctified men. The greatest need of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be baptized into death through His cross, and raised into His divine life. This the Holy Ghost alone can do. This He is doing, member by member and moment by moment, as the days go by, gathering out of every people and kindred and tongue, a body for the Lord, a Bride for the Lamb. And when the last member shall be gathered and the Bride shall be complete, the Lord will come and unite His body to its waiting and glorified Head.

So those alone belong to the true body of Christ, who through the Holy Ghost, have passed through death into resurrection. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body."

II. THE HOLY GHOST SUSTAINS THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

The apostle adds in the same verse, "We have all been made to drink into that one Spirit." It is one thing to be baptized into the body, it is another thing to drink of the ocean into which we have been plunged.

The Holy Ghost becomes the vital element of our new life. In Him we live, and move, and have our being. As the bird lives in the air, as the fish lives in the sea, as the flower lives on the sunshine, so we live in the element of the Holy Ghost; and, as we drink of His fullness, our life is maintained and grows into the maturity of Christ.

This is the secret of being filled with the Spirit, and this is the source of fruitfulness and life. Have we thus been made to drink into that one Spirit? He has to make us drink. He has to make us so hungry and thirsty that we will fly to Him for His life and love. He has to press us into the hard emergency, so as to constrain us to receive His fullness. And thus He is watering, nourishing, filling, and perfecting His glorious workmanship, and preparing it for the maturity of the body and the fullness of Christ.

III. THE HOLY GHOST UNITES THE BODY.

"For there is one body," not two, "and as we have many members in one body, so also is Christ."

1. He unites us to Christ the Head, and then He unites us to one another in Him. Each individual is connected directly with the Lord Jesus Christ, as the source of his individual life, and from Him life must come to every member and extremity of the body.

But He needs His Church just as much as His Church needs Him. What is a head without a body? What is a body without a head? And so the Church here is called by a very solemn name, "So also is Christ." The Church is spoken of as Christ; the Head in heaven is Christ; the body on earth is Christ. It represents Him; it stands for His merits, rights, and name, His holy character, and vital power. It is filled with His life; its holiness is His presence; its physical strength is derived from His resurrection life, and all its power is just the working out of the ascended Lord. He is still working through it, and continuing to work, as He began on earth, and we can look up, and say, "As He is, so are we also in this world." All our sufferings He

shares. The most tender cords of sympathy bind us to Him. When His disciples are persecuted and hurt, His heart from the throne is thrilled with sympathetic pain, and He cries, "Why persecutest thou Me?"

2. But not only so, the Holy Ghost unites the members also together. "Therefore if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; if one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." Weakness or disease in any portion of the human body affects the whole; so the morbid sickly condition of so many members of the Church of Christ today affects the whole body, and holds back the strength of Christ's cause from accomplishing results which He has a right to expect.

Therefore it is a very solemn thing to be responsible for schism or separation in the Church. When we do we sin against the heart of Jesus, we sin against the Holy Ghost, we sin against the very body of Christ. Therefore it is not only necessary to keep from offences, injuries, and attacks upon the body of Christ; but we must also maintain a healthful spiritual condition, or we shall defile the whole body by sympathetic contact. And, therefore, if we are filled with the Spirit, we shall have a very tender, compassionate and sympathetic heart toward Christ's Church, and shall be solicitous and sensitive for her welfare and prosperity. It will be our joy, like the great apostle's, "to be offered upon the sacrifice and services of her faith," and to "fill up that which remains of the sufferings of Christ for His body, the Church," sharing with the blessed Head the needs of His people, bearing one another's burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ.

IV. THE HOLY GHOST ENDUES AND ENABLES THE BODY OF CHRIST FOR ITS VARIOUS MINISTRIES.

This is the special theme of this chapter and all we have said leads up to it.

1. Every ministry, in order to be effectual, must be inspired and made efficient by the Holy Ghost. No man can rightly say that Jesus Christ is Lord, save by the Holy Ghost. God cannot use secular and natural gifts apart from the Holy Spirit. "If any man speak, let him do it as the oracle of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability that God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ." It is not splendid talent, it is not deep culture, that constitute efficiency in the body of Christ, it is simply and absolutely the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a divine ministry and must have a divine equipment.

2. We are also taught that every member of the Church may have the Holy Ghost for service; for "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal"; that is to say, the Holy Ghost is no respecter of persons, but is ready to endue and enable every servant of Christ for the work to which he is called, and the place in the body to which he is appointed.

This blessed enduement is not for apostles, prophets, miracle workers, teachers, special officials, merely, but for every member of the Church of God. Every part of the body is necessary and important, and, as the apostle reasons very beautifully from human physiology, the weakest and humblest members of the human frame are often most highly honored; so also, in the Church of Christ, God uses and honors the weakest and the lowliest, filling them with His own enabling, and thus glorifying His own grace.

3. There is infinite variety. As in the human body, every member has his separate office, and the unity is enriched by the diversity which it harmonizes. God does not want any man to copy another, but each to be himself, with God added.

Our ministries are determined in some measure by our place in the body, by our environment, by the circumstances and providences amid which we are placed, by leadings, and natural instincts and preferences, and by the gifts both of nature and of grace. Just where we are, the Holy Ghost waits to equip us, enable us, and fit us for higher usefulness, and most efficient service.

He names a number of these gifts. Some are called be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, some workers of miracles, some counselors, some just helps, and some governments; but you will notice, that the helps come before the governments, and the teachers come before the miracle workers. It is not brilliancy that God recognizes, but service; and if you cannot be a wonder worker, you can be at least a little lamp to give light to the path of some traveler, or you can be an armor-bearer to stand beside some other worker and help along.

4. Each of these gifts of the Holy Ghost is administered by the Holy Ghost Himself. The man, who is used as an instrument, does not receive the glory and is not recognized as the worker, but simply as the instrument. And so we have the significant expression, "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit." It is the Spirit that works, and the man is just the vessel through whom He exercises His sovereign and Almighty grace. As Richard Baxter has put it so wisely, "Each of us is just a pen in the hand of God, and what honor is there in a pen?" While we recognize this we shall be saved from all self-consciousness, egotism, and elation, and we shall lie in the dust at His blessed feet, hidden and empty vessels, in the place where He can use us best.

5. There is one other thought of great significance, and that is, that as the servant uses the gift, it grows. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." As we wisely use and faithfully improve the gifts of the Holy Ghost, they grow in effectiveness and we become more and more used and honored of God, until He may be pleased to add to us not only one, but many gifts, as we covet earnestly the best gifts, and He shall multiply the fruit of our service by thousands and tens of thousands, so that, in the day of recompense, our seed shall be as the stars of heaven and our crown shall be brighter than their supernal light.

What a solemn truth it is to have God Himself as our Enabler, our Enduement for service! Yes, He has given to us a crown to win; He has given to us a life in which to win it; He has given to us an age of extraordinary opportunities, and He has given us the Holy Ghost to work out in our lives the highest possibilities of existence. God help us to be true to our tremendous trust, and to our brief but infinite opportunities, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the power of the blessed Holy Ghost.

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