

(Power From on High) 14. the Holy Spirit in Galatians

by A.B. Simpson

The Holy Ghost is essential to our Christian life, and we receive Him by simple faith in the promises of God.

Scripture: John 14:26, Galatians 3:1-3, Galatians 3:5, Galatians 4:6, Galatians 5:16, Galatians 5:22-23, Galatians 5:25, Galatians 6:1, Galatians 6:7-8

Topics: "The Holy Spirit", "Faith and Grace"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the significance of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers, urging the Galatians to recognize that they received the Spirit not through works of the law but by faith. He warns against the dangers of returning to legalism and highlights that the Christian life is sustained by the same grace that saves us. Simpson explains that the Holy Spirit is essential for sanctification, empowerment for service, and the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit, which is love. He encourages believers to walk in the Spirit, co-operating with God's work in their lives, and to approach others with compassion and humility. Ultimately, he reassures that sowing to the Spirit will yield eternal rewards.

Transcript

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Gal. 5: 25.

The Galatians were the Scottish Highlanders of ancient times and the ancestors, also, of the hot-blooded race that transferred the name of Gaul from the Province of Galatia to ancient France.

They were a warm-hearted and generous people, quick to receive the teachings of Paul, and quick also to be led astray by the false teachers that followed him. And so we find him warning and pleading with them, with his warm-hearted enthusiasm, against the seductions of the Judaizing party, who had begun to lead them back from the simplicity of Christ to the entanglements of the law.

The theme, therefore, of the Epistle, suited to the condition of the Galatians, is FREE GRACE. In opposition to the misleading men who were seducing them from the liberty of the gospel, he reiterates, again and again, the freeness of the grace that saved them at the beginning, and that now must still sanctify and lead them all the way through.

And so this thought gives tone to all the apostle's references to the Holy Spirit in the epistle. These references are by no means few or unimportant, and they are all touched with the complexion of this

glorious theme, the freeness of the Gospel and, of course, inferentially, the freeness of the Holy Ghost.

I. The Holy Ghost is received by faith and not by the works of the law.

"O, foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you? This only would I learn of you. Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Gal. 3: 1, 2.

The Holy Ghost is just as freely given as the blood of Jesus and the justifying righteousness of God through Christ. The Holy Ghost is promised just as salvation is promised, and received just as salvation is received, by simple faith in the blood of the Lamb, and the act of appropriating the blessing to ourselves. Not by our surrendering, not by our consecration, not by our sufferings or crucifixions, but by simply believing, do we receive this great gift of Jesus Christ, the blessed Holy Ghost.

He is not given because we deserve it; He is not given because we have suffered; He is not given to those who struggle, but He is freely given to those who freely receive Him, on the simple promise of God, and by child-like trust in His grace and love.

We must trust the Holy Ghost as well as Jesus. We must speak to the rock and bid the waters flow. If we strike it with our violent hands and our struggling self-efforts we shall only keep back the blessing which we seek. Let us believe; let us receive the Holy Ghost.

II. Our whole Christian life must be sustained and maintained by the Holy Ghost through the same simple faith by which we first began.

And so we read again, Galatians 3: 3: "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"

Oh, how many are so foolish! They begin as hopeless sinners at the foot of the cross, taking all as the sovereign gift of divine mercy, and then they begin to build up a sort of reputation and condition of self-constituted strength and try to sanctify themselves by their own set of credentials, crucifixions, and ineffectual struggles. It is, indeed, utterly foolish and vain. We need the same grace to keep us as saves us at first. "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand."

Our Christian life is just a succession of the simple acts of faith with which we first began. "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him." And the Holy Ghost is essential to sustain and maintain all the exercises of spiritual life by His own divine efficiency and spontaneous working to the very close of our Christian life.

O, beloved, have you been so foolish? Cease your hard and vain endeavors, and simply abide in Him. Be filled with the Spirit, and the fruit will take care of itself.

III. Our Christian service and our power for service through the Holy Ghost are by simple faith and the free grace of God in Christ.

And so we have the next appeal in Galatians 3:5. "He, therefore, that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth He it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

Yes, the very ministry, for which the Holy Ghost enables us, must be done in simple faith and dependence upon His gracious gifts. The Holy Ghost in His power for service, is given just the same as in the beginning, in the name of Jesus, in the exercise of divine mercy, and by simply believing God and taking

Him at His word. According to our faith is it unto us. "He that ministereth the Spirit"; here is not some man, but it is God. It is Jesus that ministereth the Holy Ghost and He does it to them that believe and as they believe. Would we then have this deeper fullness, we must believe in the Holy Spirit; we must receive Him by implicit trust in the promises of God.

IV. We have the Holy Spirit next presented as the sum of all the blessings that come to us through Christ and the great covenant with Abraham on which the gospel is founded in Gal. 3:13, 14, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law . . . that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

The promise of the Spirit, therefore, is the substance of the covenant with Abraham and the supreme blessing of Christ's redemption. And as the covenant with Abraham was purely one of faith and not of works, long antecedent to the dispensation of law, so the Holy Ghost must be as freely given as all the other blessings of the gospel. The inference is quite justified that if we have not received the Holy Ghost we have not inherited the full blessings of the covenant with Abraham, and the full purchase of Christ's redemption.

The Holy Ghost is just the Agent who applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ, and without Him the cross becomes but a vain possibility to us, and the gospel an unfilled promise.

Beloved, have you received the promise of the Spirit? Other promises are called the promises, but this is called THE PROMISE; it is the one all-embracing promise that includes all the rest, and without it all the rest are vain. Oh, let us claim the promise of the Father, and the inheritance of faith in all its blessed fullness!

V. THE SPIRIT OF SONSHIP AND OF CHRIST.

The Holy Ghost is next presented, in this beautiful epistle, as the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ dwelling in our heart through our union with Him, and bringing us into His very sonship, and the fellowship of His inheritance. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Gal. 4: 6.

This sonship is the peculiar promise of the New Testament, the peculiar privilege of those who are united to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not the sonship that comes by virtue of our creation; this is not even the sonship that comes by virtue of our regeneration and God's begetting us as His children, but this is a new and higher sonship, that comes by virtue of our union with Jesus Christ, and it brings us into His very relationship to the Father.

He is the only begotten Son, the First Born, and we also are first born ones, and called "the church of the first born ones who are written in heaven." It is in His very Sonship and with His very heart within us, that we look up and say, "Abba Father;" it is a double Fatherhood, a twofold experience, born of His very heart and then wedded to His Only Begotten Son. Oh, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! We are the sons of God, and "we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him." We are no longer servants, but sons and heirs of God, through Christ.

Beloved, have we received power thus to become the sons of God and to let the Holy Ghost work in us our high calling?

VI. THE HOLY GHOST AS THE SPIRIT OF SANCTIFICATION AND VICTORY.

GAL. 5:16. "This I say then, walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the Spirit," that is, the Holy Spirit, "lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh against the Spirit, and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

A single letter here sheds God's own perfect light upon the exposition of this verse, and that is the capital with which we spell the word Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that resists the flesh, and He alone can overcome it and exclude it, and as we "walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."

Here is God's great secret of holiness; not fighting sin, but being filled with God. It is the old principle of the expulsive power of a stronger force and a supreme affection. Just as water excludes air from that tumbler when it is filled with water; just as light excludes the darkness when the room is lighted, so the indwelling of the Holy Ghost excludes the presence and power of sin.

It is the old question of struggling to sanctify our wives, and fighting the flesh to keep it down, on the one hand, or rising with God above it and dwelling in that higher, holier element, where we are removed from its control. It is the question whether we shall try to cleanse the swamp of its filth and its abominable creatures, or whether we shall fly above it, and dwell in the pure light of heaven with the Holy Ghost, where its miasmas cannot reach us, and its serpents cannot crawl.

It is the old fable of the cleansing of the Aegean stables by spades and carts and scavengers, or the simple and better way of letting the current of the mighty river flow through that stable until it sweeps all its impurities away and turns its banks into a paradise of loveliness. In a word, it is the glorious privilege of sanctified, not by works but by free grace, not by self effort, but by simple faith in the indwelling presence and power of God.

VII. THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.

This naturally follows from the previous thought, and it is exquisitely brought out in the next few verses, where we have the works of the flesh in their manifold forms. First, the acts of impurity; then, the sources of impurity; then, the idolatry to which impurity leads; then, malignity and hate in all their forms, pouring out toward men the evil that had already separated from God, and finally, the awful excess of crime and sensuality into which it brings men.

In contrast with this dreadful picture He gives us "the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance, faith."

These are not fruits, but fruit. It is all one fruit. We have not a great many things to do but just one, and that one thing is to love; for all these manifestations of the fruit are but various forms of love. Joy is love exulting; peace is love reposing; longsuffering is love enduring; gentleness is love refined; meekness is love with bowed head; goodness is love in action; temperance is true self-love, and faith is love confiding, so that the whole sum of Christian living is just loving. And we do not even have to love, but we only have to be filled with the Spirit and then the love will flow as a fountain, spontaneously, from the life within. It is all free grace; it is all the fullness of an inexhaustible stream, the artesian well that pours from the boundless depths, and flows in floods of blessings on every side.

Oh, how easy is this life, how delightful, how true, how glorious!

VIII. OUR PART IN RECEIVING THE SPIRIT, AND CO-WORKING WITH HIS WORKING.

GAL. 5:25. "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Is there then nothing for us to do but just lie passive in His hands while He works in us? Oh, yes; there is much for us to do. We must "walk in the Spirit;" we must co-operate with God; we must keep step with our blessed Companion; we must follow as He leads the way.

It is the habit of constant dependence and obedience; and as we thus walk with Him, He will be manifested in us and will fill us with His fullness and work out in us the fruition of His life.

There are things to do, but they are to be done at His leading and at His enabling. There are attitudes to be maintained, but they are as natural as the steppings of a little child that holds its mother's hand, and walks by her side through the great city, where it knows not a single street or number. It is not our walk so much as our Companion. It was not Enoch so much as the One with whom Enoch walked. And yet Enoch had to keep step with His blessed Friend and, as we thus abide in Him and walk in Him and follow Him, we shall know all the fullness of His love, and will follow on to know the Lord.

IX. THE ATTITUDE OF THE SPIRIT FILLED MAN TO THE WEAK AND ERRING.

GAL. 6:1. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

Is this life in the Spirit to make us proud and self-sufficient in our attitude to others? No, it will make us tender, compassionate and full of sympathy to the faltering ones, who stumble by our side. It is the spiritual man that is to restore the erring, and even he, with all his experience, is to consider himself, "lest he also be tempted," and to know that he is just as weak and frail as his brother.

It was when Peter had reiterated his love and had been accepted anew of his Lord after the deep and humbling lesson, that he received, as his highest trust, the command to feed the feeble sheep and the helpless lambs. So, as we are filled with the Spirit, it will be the spirit of gentleness, the spirit of patience, the spirit of compassion, the spirit that will restore the erring, and seek and save the lost.

Finally, the Spirit, in relation to the future; sowing to the Spirit, reaping to the Spirit.

What is the bearing of all this present life on the life to come? It is very real; it is very solemn; it is very lasting. "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting, and he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption."

Oh, how the days are telling! We may scatter the thistle down; we may throw our precious seed in the depths of sin, but there shall be a sad reaping bye-and-bye; or, we may sow seeds of patience and trust, of holy suffering, and unselfish service, and bye-and-bye we shall reap if we faint not.

Oh, ye that trifle away the precious hours and opportunities of these days, some day you will wake to find how much you have lost! Some day, when, with a converted soul and a consecrated life, you long for holy usefulness and oh, how you will mourn that you wasted your youth and lost the opportunities that would have fitted you for glorious work for God until it is too late!

O, ye who seem to see no fruit now, go on! Sow to the Spirit and wait; "Cast your seed upon the waters, and you shall find it after many days." And some day, in yonder heaven, you will know what this promise means, "I have called thee, that thou shouldst plant the heavens." Some day as you see the avenues of

glory planted with the trees of righteousness and blooming with the flowers of Paradise, an angel voice by your side may tell you that these were the sowing of years of faith and patience, these were the seeds of faith and prayer, of sacrifice and obedience, that you planted long ago.

Pray on, beloved. You are planting seed in heavenly soil, and some day your rapturous soul shall embrace the answer. Suffer on, patient soldier of the cross. It may not be given to you to serve; it may not be given to you to preach the Gospel; it may not be given to you to do the work for which you would gladly give all the world; yours is to stand bravely, truly, in the ordeal of pain, misconception, irritation, uncongenial surroundings in the household, in the business office, in the place of terrible temptation. Be true. You are sowing to the Spirit, and some day you will reap the amaranthine flowers and fruits of glory.

You shall have your crown. Nothing that the Spirit breathes can ever die. Nothing that the Spirit plants can ever perish. Sow on. Weep on. Wait on. Hold on. It may be weeping now, it will be rejoicing bye-and-bye. It may be sowing now, but it will be reaping bye-and-bye.

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