

(Power From on High) 15. All the Blessings of the Spirit; Or, the Holy Ghost in Ephesians

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of receiving the blessings of the Spirit through faith, and living out the Holy Spirit in our daily experience to achieve the overcoming life through the Holy Ghost.

Topics: "Spiritual Blessings", "Holy Spirit"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the profound blessings of the Holy Spirit as outlined in Ephesians, highlighting the distinction between spiritual blessings and the person of the Holy Ghost. He explains that the Holy Spirit seals believers, grants illumination, and provides access to God's presence, enabling a deep communion with Him. Simpson encourages Christians to recognize the power available to them through the Holy Spirit, which empowers them to live an overcoming life and fulfill their divine calling. He concludes with a call to not grieve the Holy Spirit, who desires to work within us for our highest good and glory.

Transcript

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all the blessings of the Spirit in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." Ephesians 1: 3.

This is the text of the whole Epistle to the Ephesians. That epistle is an unfolding of "all the blessings of the Spirit." This is the true translation of the passage.

There is a great difference between the blessings of the Spirit and spiritual blessings. This is a case where a single noun is worth a hundred adjectives. The person of the Holy Ghost is worth more than all His gifts.

The blessings unfolded in this epistle are said to be "in the heavenlies"; that is, in the higher realm and element where we dwell in Christ, above the natural life, and in fellowship with the heavenly world.

The apostle's theme, in this sublime epistle, is the higher blessings of the Holy Ghost, which He makes known to those who enter into the fullness of Christ, May the Holy Spirit Himself enable us to see and enter into all the blessings of the Spirit!

I. THE SEALING OF THE SPIRIT.

"In whom, after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." Ephesians 1:13-14.

We have already spoken in a former chapter of the seal and earnest of the Spirit, and it is not necessary to enlarge upon them here. The seal is the mark of ownership, reality, certainty and resemblance, the earnest is the first installment and pledge of the full inheritance. The Holy Ghost, when He seals us, makes real and sure to us the blessings of our inheritance and stamps us with the image of Christ; and, as the earnest, He gives to us the promise and the pledge of all the fullness of our future heritage.

This promise is the privilege of every disciple, and it may be claimed and received, by simple faith, the moment we believe. It is recognized not as the crowning experience of Christian life, but rather as its beginning.

Beloved, have we been thus set apart and stamped as the purchased possession of God, and made to know in our inmost experience the hope of our calling, and the foretaste of our future glory?

II. THE SPIRIT OF ILLUMINATION.

The Holy Ghost next opens our inner eyes, and reveals to us the vision of our high calling and our full inheritance. This is given at great length in the sublime passage, Ephesians 1:15-23. This is the apostle's first prayer for the sealed ones of whom he has already spoken.

He asks for them, that the Holy Ghost may be to them the "Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." This is a special divine revelation beyond the power of human intellect in its own natural wisdom and strength. It is not only that new truths are unfolded and illuminated but new spiritual vision is given to understand and realize them. The eyes of their understanding are to be enlightened. This should rather be translated, "the eyes of your heart." It is the deeper spiritual nature that is here referred to, the very core of our being, and the fountain of our thoughts and conceptions of divine things.

It is not through our cold intellect, but through our spiritual instincts, that we are to understand the heavenly vision. There are things that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have they entered into the heart of man; but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." There are humble Christians who could not spell a word of two syllables or explain a single rule of grammar, who have thoughts and conceptions of God, and raptures of heavenly joy, for which an angel would gladly leave his throne.

The object of this vision is: first, "that ye may know what is the hope of His calling." This means the glorious purpose for which He has called us, as an object of delightful hope and expectation, that we may know our high destiny and be thrilled with the joy of its anticipation.

Next, He prays that we may know "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." The word "know" in all these clauses, means, in the original, to know fully, to know to the utmost. The "inheritance in the saints," means that glorious work of grace which Christ is fulfilling in the hearts of His people, and which is yet to be consummated in the eternal glory, when we shall sit with Him upon His throne, and share with Him, as His glorified Bride, His eternal kingdom. This is the inheritance for which He Himself gave up His primeval throne, and for which we count all things but loss.

The apostle prays that the sealed ones may catch the vision of this glorious inheritance in its present and future possibilities, and may fully know all the riches of its glory. This will take the glow from every earthly picture and from every worldly prospect, and this will make sorrow light and things present seem like

empty bubbles and worthless dreams. Still further, he prays that they may fully know "what is the exceeding greatness" or rather the surpassing greatness of His power, or, as the Greek expresses it, "His 'dynamite,' to us-ward who believe."

It is not merely joy and glory that the vision unfolds, but actual and practical power. There is nothing we so much need as power. We are ever coming into conflict with forces too strong for our human weakness. We are fighting a ceaseless battle and we are inadequate for the weakest of our foes and the smallest of our difficulties. We are "without strength," and the deepest need of our heart is for spiritual power. But there is for us all the power we need, treasured up in Him who said, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." The word here used for power has received a new significance through the progress of modern science.

The terrific force expressed by "dynamite" is here represented as the figure of the spiritual power that the holy Ghost wants to show us and impart to us, if we can only see and receive the surpassing greatness of His "dynamite" to us-ward who believe. But we must see it, and believe it, or we cannot have it.

What is the difference between the nineteenth century, with its blaze of light and its resources of mechanical power, and the fifteenth century with its slow and tedious processes of toil? What is the difference between our Empire Express sweeping over the land at sixty miles an hour, and the poor Indian savage on his snow shoes, travelling in a month the distance that now we can cover in a day? There was just as much power in nature then as now. The hidden forces of electricity and of steam were all in existence then, as much as today. Ah, the difference was, he did not know it, and we do. And so there are stored up in Christ spiritual forces surpassingly greater than the dynamite or the electric engine; but millions of Christians go stumbling, groaning, and defeated through life, because they do not know the riches of the glory of their inheritance.

What right have we to be weak? What business have we to fail? What excuse have we to be ignorant with such a treasure house of blessing stored up at the throne of grace, and at the call of faith and prayer?

And then he gives us an object lesson of all this in the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not a mere theory but an accomplished fact. All this power has been actually proved and tested, and what was true once can always be true again. What was fulfilled in the life of Jesus can be fulfilled in each of us. And so he prays that our vision may be quickened and enlarged, so that we can see the working of his mighty power, as it was wrought "in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

All his surpassing power has been already exemplified in the resurrection of Christ. It burst for Him the fetters of the tomb, rent asunder the sepulcher, shattered the Roman seal upon the stone, scattered the terrified soldiers that guarded the tomb, and brought forth the risen Lord in all the glory of His immortal life. Not only so, it raised Him far above the empty tomb, far above the earth itself, up through the air, and the fields of space, past the planets and the constellations, yonder to the Central Throne, where He sat down in the place of honor and power, at the right hand of the eternal God.

It exalted Him far above all government and power and might and law and every name that is named, both in the present age and in all the ages to come. Think of all the names you know; think of all the powers

you fear; think of all the foes you dread, He is far above them all.

And He is there not for Himself but for you. He is Head over all things for His body, the Church. His very business there is to use His power for us. His eternal occupation is to represent us. He is as much in need of us as we are of Him. He is but a head without us; for we are His body; we are the complement of His life; we are the other half of His being, and when He helps us He helps Himself; when He blesses us He is more truly blessed. Therefore we may confidently claim the boundless fullness of His blessing and know that all that is true of Him may be just as true of us, for "as He is, so also are we in this world."

To see this vision is to be omnipotent. May the Holy Ghost anoint our eyes and show us His glory!

III. THE SPIRIT OF ACCESS AND COMMUNION.

Having seen the glory of our ascended Lord, we are next admitted by the Holy Spirit, in access and communion, into His presence. "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." The door is open now, and we can go in and out with the freedom of children, gazing upon His glory and drawing from His fullness, strength for weakness, and grace for grace.

This is by the Spirit. It is He who gives to us the sense of need, the spirit of prayer, the confidence to come, the witness of acceptance, and the blessed fellowship of constant communion. We are to "pray in the Holy Ghost," and as we follow His suggestions, and breathe out His groanings, and aspirations, our God-given prayers will reach the throne and come back to us in blessing.

IV. THE INDWELLING SPIRIT.

But now we have a far grander vision. We have seen the glory yonder, within the heavenly gates, and amid the splendors of the throne. We have had permission to enter through the open doors of prayer, and gaze upon it, and draw from its stores of grace. But now the Holy Ghost brings it all down to us, and puts it into our very heart and being.

The heaven above becomes the heaven within; the Savior enthroned at God's right hand becomes the enthroned Lord of our heart and being, and God Himself removes His tabernacle from heaven to earth, and dwells in very deed with men, and in the temple of the believing heart. This is the next stage of the Spirit's working in this sublime epistle. It is twofold; first, in the whole Church as the body of Christ, Ephesians 2: 21, 22. "The whole building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

Then also it is fulfilled in the heart of each individual Christian, Ephesians 3: 16-19. "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."

The essence and substance of this prayer is, that we may be filled with all the fullness of God, and that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, so fully that we shall "know the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" of His measureless love.

Now for this the Holy Ghost has to strengthen us and prepare us. In our ordinary condition, we could not stand the glory and power of such a blessing. It would be like putting a charge of powder that would fill a

cannon into a pocket pistol, and the only effect would be the explosion and destruction of the pistol. If God were to give us all the power for which we sometimes ask him, it would destroy us. We should be so lifted up with self-consciousness and self-importance that we should be ruined, or else we should be crushed by the weight of glory. Therefore, He prays, first, that we may be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in the heart by faith.

Just as the maker of that cannon strengthens it at the breech, doubling the thickness and strength of the metal where the pressure is heaviest, and gradually tapering it to the muzzle, that the resistant power shall be equalized to the strain, so the Holy Ghost prepares us to be the vessels of His grace and power. Perhaps the maker of that cannon experimented for many years before he got the quality of the metal and the strength of the barrel perfectly adjusted to his purpose. Perhaps he often broke it up and recast it, before he dared to put the stamp of his establishment upon it, and trust it in the battleship of his country. And so the Holy Ghost has to work long and patiently with us, and often to break us, over and over again, before we can be fully trusted with His highest commissions, and stand the exceeding weight of glory which He wishes to put within us, and upon us. Let us not be afraid of His mighty love, nor shrink from the pressure of His wise and mighty, molding hand.

In the vision of Daniel the empires of the world were represented under the magnificent image of a figure with a head of gold, shoulders and arms of silver, trunk of brass, and legs of iron. It was a very splendid-looking form of grandeur and power, but the end of it was that it was broken to pieces, and scattered like the chaff of the summer threshing floor. The secret all lay in this, that as the image descended toward its feet, the strength of the iron was mixed with miry clay, and the feet, on which its grand form rested, were no better than clods of mud.

Many a grand looking life has no better support than this, and all the work that rests on mixed materials must go to pieces in the hour of strain. God is taking the clay out of us. He wants men and women made of unmixed steel, that will stand the pressure of the power that He means to give them, and the glory with which He is yet to clothe them.

The truth is, God blesses every one of us as much as He can and fills us as full as we can hold. The trouble is, some of us cannot hold much. As we yield ourselves to His gracious working, He will fill us more and more with all the fullness of God. Christ shall be to us an indwelling presence, and we shall "comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." For He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think," and the only limit is, "according to the power that worketh in us."

Dr. Boardman tells of a lady in London, to whom this passage came with such convicting power that she felt she could not rest until God had made it real to her. She knew that she had never received exceeding abundantly above all that she asked or thought, and she just went to her Father, and asked Him to make His word true to her, and told Him that she would never cease until this verse had become her actual experience.

She waited upon God for many weeks, and when she came back she told her pastor that her prayer was answered, and God had revealed Himself to her in a manner far exceeding her highest thought. But she said that He had shown her that there was so much more yet for her to receive, that He had raised her thought as far above her blessing, as her blessing had been above her former thought. And so He was leading her on from glory to glory, and as each new capacity was filled it was enlarged and filled again.

This is indeed true ; and so we may all have exceeding abundantly and be kept forever in that strange paradox of the spiritual life, ever satisfied and yet ever hungering and thirsting for more.

V. THE LIVING OUT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR DAILY EXPERIENCE.

All this beautiful inward experience would be but a holy mysticism if it did not have a direct practical bearing on our common life. And so we have in Ephesians 5: 9, 10, 17, 18, the practical bearing of all this upon our everyday life. "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth; proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. Wherefore, be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." This is to be the habit of our daily life, and as we are thus filled with the Holy Ghost, our lives will be filled with goodness, righteousness, and reality.

We will not be shams and professions, but blessed expressions of the divine life within, and our whole being, inspired with a divine exhilaration, shall overflow in gladness, goodness, sweetness, unselfishness, and blessing, to all with whom we come in contact.

VI. THE OVERCOMING LIFE THROUGH THE HOLY GHOST.

The last picture in the epistle carries us forward to the closing and crowning experiences of the Christian life. It is a scene of conflict and fierce temptation. We are "wrestling with principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, with spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies." These throng the thickest at the very gates of heaven. Think it not strange that we should find such beings and such conflicts in the heavenly places. That is just where they love to concentrate their forces, and turn us back at the very portals of glory. Let us not be "terrified by our adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to us of salvation, and that of God." We have seen these principalities before in this epistle. They are the powers of which we were told in the first chapter, that Christ was "far above them." They are conquered foes, and in Him we are already "more than conquerors."

But how shall we meet these terrific forces? Thank God for the Holy Ghost again. "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, then the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."

First, we have the sword of the Spirit, Ephesians 6: 17. "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." This was Christ's weapon in the conflict when He met the adversary in the wilderness, with the repeated word, "It is written." And when the devil, surprised at the power of this heavenly sword, picked it up and began to use it himself by quoting Scripture, Christ took the other edge of it, and struck him back the last fatal blow by His answer, so sublimely wise, "It is written AGAIN."

The Holy Ghost has given us this Word, and He is not likely to ignore it in His own manifestations to our hearts. Indeed, it is His purpose that we shall live out every particle before we pass from this earthly stage to the life beyond. It is He, and He alone, that can make it the sword in our victorious hands, suggesting to us the promise or the reproof or the command which we need for each new situation, and then arming it with the fiery point and piercing edge, that will cut through all the devil's disguises and make us always to triumph in the battle of life.

Then we have the prayer of the Spirit in the eighteenth verse. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." This is our next victorious weapon; and the most remarkable thing about it is, that the principal part of the

prayer is not for ourselves at all, but for others. It is when, like wise generals, we turn the position of our foe and attack him directly, by praying for others, that we compel him to retreat and let us alone; and, as we become occupied with the high and holy thoughts of unselfish love and prayer, we forget the troubles that were crushing us and the temptations that were pressing us and we are lifted clear above the battlefield, into those heavenly places where the serpent's fangs cannot reach us, and the devil's fiery darts cannot come.

VII. WHAT SHOULD BE OUR ATTITUDE TO THIS HEAVENLY FRIEND?

We have it beautifully expressed in Ephesians 4: 30. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." It is not said that we make Him angry, or drive Him away; but we grieve Him, disappoint Him, and cause Him pain.

He has set His heart upon accomplishing in us, and for us, the highest possibilities of love and blessing; when we will not yield to His wise and holy will; when we will not let Him educate us, mold us, separate us from the things that weaken and destroy us, and fit us for the weight of glory that He is preparing for us, His heart is vexed, His love is wounded, His purpose is baffled; and if the Comforter could weep, we would see the tears of loving sorrow upon His gentle face.

Just, as a mother fondly longs for the highest education and success of her child, and feels repaid for all her sacrifices and toils when she beholds her noble boy in the hour of his triumph; just as a loving teacher spends years in the training of his pupil, and when, at last, some day, that successful student is rewarded with the highest prizes and the acclamations of the university, he takes his favorite in his arms with a joy far greater than as if the triumph were his own, so our blessed Mother God is jealously seeking to work out in our lives the grandest possibilities of immortal existence; and, some day, when that blessed Spirit shall take us by the hand and present us to Jesus as His glorious Bride, "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing," the joy of the Holy Ghost will be greater than our own.

Oh, let us not disappoint Him! Let us not grieve Him. Let us not hold back from Him. Let us not sin against His forgiving, longsuffering love. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

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