

(Power From on High) 16. the Holy Spirit in Philippians

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the supply of the Spirit and the communion of the Spirit in the life of a Christian, and how these two aspects of the Spirit's work are essential for Christian union and for carrying out the work of the Lord in these last times.

Scripture: Philippians 1:19, Philippians 2:1

Topics: "The Holy Spirit", "Fellowship in Christ"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the profound relationship between the Holy Spirit and the believers in Philippians, highlighting the importance of prayer and the supply of the Spirit in achieving a triumphant Christian life. He describes the epistle as a reflection of deep love and communion, where the Holy Spirit acts as a chorus leader, harmonizing the lives of believers and turning trials into triumphs. Simpson encourages the church to engage in prayer for one another, fostering a deeper fellowship in the Spirit that transcends mere affection and leads to a shared mission in Christ. The sermon calls for unity in love and purpose, urging believers to embrace their communal calling and the transformative power of the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

"For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." Phil. 1: 19. "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." Phil. 2: 1-2.

The Epistle to the Philippians is the sweetest of the Pauline letters. It is the unfolding of his inmost heart and of his tenderest relations, to the most fondly-loved of his spiritual flocks. No other church e as quite so dear to him as the little band at Philippi, who were the first seal of the beginning of his missionary work on the continent of Europe. He could say to them truly, "I have you in my heart. Ye are all partakers of my grace. I thank God for your fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now."

But it is not only the expression of a hallowed human love; it is also the embodiment of all that is most mellow, mature and delicate, in the Christian spirit and temper. It is the ripeness of the mellow fruit, just ready to fall from the branch; it is the bloom on the peach, delicate as the rainbow tint, and soft as the wing

of an angel. There is something about its tone that can be

understood only by the finer senses of the deepest and highest Christian experience.

While the great Epistle to the Ephesians is like the tabernacle building, with its deeper and deeper unfolding of truth and life, the Epistle to the Philippians is like the sweet incense on the golden altar and in the holy place.

There are only two references to the Holy Spirit in this epistle, but these two are in perfect keeping with the structure and spirit of the whole epistle.

I. THE SUPPLY OF THE SPIRIT.

The word for "supply" employed here is a very unusual one, and has a special and strongly figurative significance. It is the Greek word, *Epichoregos*, and it refers to the *Epichoregos*, or chorus leader in ancient Greece. On a great festival occasion it was customary for a certain man, as an act of public generosity and also a distinguished honor to himself, to provide for the public entertainment of the people by an elaborate musical exercise, consisting of a great many pieces, a great variety of music, musical instruments and performers; it was his business to supply all that was necessary for this performance, to meet all the expenses of the occasion, to secure all the performers, instruments, assistants, etc., and see that everything was supplied and also to lead the chorus. From this old word, our expressions chorus, and chorus-choir are derived. Now this word conveys the idea of supplying, but also of supplying especially the parts in a musical chorus; and it carries along with it the idea of something harmonious and glorious. It is a very abundant supply and it brings a very triumphant result.

This word is used in a remarkable passage in the first chapter of 2 Peter, "Add to your faith courage, knowledge, temperance, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity." This word "add," is the same Greek term, *Epichorego*. It means, "chorus into your faith and life these beautiful graces"; bring them all into tune, and work them out in harmony and praise, so that your life shall be a doxology of joy and thanksgiving. And then, at the close of that paragraph, the word reappears, "For so shall an entrance be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Literally it might be translated, "So an entrance shall be chorused unto you." That is, the very graces that were wrought into your earthly life and attended you as a heavenly choir shall wait for you at the gates of heaven and sing you home to your coronation. The love and gentleness, the faith and patience that you exercised in your earthly pilgrimage shall be waiting yonder, as a train of musicians, and shall celebrate your victory and your recompense.

Now this is the word used in the passage in Philippians, "the supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus." The Holy Ghost is the choir leader, and He is bringing into the apostle's life all the supplies of grace he needs to make his life not only tolerable but triumphant, and turn everything into a chorus of praise.

The apostle had just been telling us before of the peculiar trials through which he was passing and the subtle foes that were distressing and harassing him, by even preaching the very Gospel that he loved so well, for contention and strife, "Supposing," he says, "to add affliction to my bonds." Yet so abundant was the supply of the Holy Ghost, as the Choir Leader of his victorious life, that he rose above their jealous hate, turned the very trial into a triumph and was enabled to bring blessing out of the devil's blows and to exclaim in a chorus of praise, "What then, notwithstanding every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice; for I know that this shall turn to my

salvation," that is, my complete and full salvation, "through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

And so for us, beloved, the Holy Ghost is able to provide so fully, that

"Ills of every shape and every name,

Transformed to blessings, miss their cruel aim."

This was to turn to his salvation. He does not, of course, mean his literal deliverance from condemnation, but that deeper, fuller life in Christ which is all comprehended in complete salvation. It is one thing to be "saved as by fire"; it is quite another thing to be saved to the uttermost.

Now the apostle says that this is to come to him "through their prayer." We can help each other to the deeper and fuller supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus. If our heart is open to receive the blessing, the prayers of others reach us and add to the measure of our fullness.

Every breath of true prayer accomplishes something and makes some addition to the measure of blessing that we ask for ourselves and others. There is no greater service that you can render to a true child of God than to pray for him in the Holy Ghost, and in that deep divine love that brings you into a common touch with his life and needs. Especially is this true of those who stand in public places to represent Christ to others, and who must receive, first, the stores of blessing which they are called to impart. Let us pray for them and we may be very sure the blessing will come back to us. To keep up the figure of the text and the imagery of the chorus, our prayers are just the breath which fills the mighty organ and swells the strain that bursts from every pipe and every note.

II. THE COMMUNION OF THE SPIRIT.

PHIL. 2: 1, 2. This passage is a very exquisite one. It touches the most delicate shades of Christian feeling. It speaks of "consolation in Christ," the tenderness of His comforting love. It speaks of the "comfort of love," the sweet and healing balm of sympathy and holy affection. It speaks of the "fellowship of the Spirit," the communion of the saint with God, and with his brethren in the holy Ghost. It speaks of "bowels of mercies," the finer chords of spiritual sensitiveness, which thrill responsive to every touch of pain or joy in each other's hearts. There is something about it so refined and exquisite that the rude, coarse mind cannot grasp it, and it is literally true, "that none but he that feels it knows."

It is especially of this third phrase that we are to speak -- "If there be any fellowship of the Spirit." The Greek word is Koinonia, which might be literally translated, in common. It really means to have things in common.

1. It is used first of our fellowship with God. "Truly, our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ." "The communion of the Holy Ghost."

Our communion with God is the basis of all other communion. And communion with God is not merely external worship and articulate prayer but it is really oneness with God, and having everything in common "with Him." Just as oil and water cannot mix, just as iron and clay cannot blend, so there can be no communion between God and the sinful soul. We must be reconciled to Him; we must be at one with Him; we must be conformed to His image and partakers of His very nature and filled with His Holy Spirit.

There must be in us the organ of intercourse. It is not enough to have a telegraph wire reaching your office from the distant city, but you must also have a battery here in order to receive the message of the wire. And so we must have with us the spiritual organs of communion with God, in order to enter into His fellowship.

We may have such fellowship. The Holy Ghost is the channel and organ of this communion. He is at once the electric current that conveys and the battery that interprets the message both ways. "Through Him we have access unto the Father." We can pour out our heart into His and He can pour in His heart into ours. We can ask Him for the things we need and get them. But more than all the things we get, is the answer of His own heart to ours. And more than all the words which He speaks to us, or we speak to Him, is the deep and silent communion of the heart that is in accord with His holy will, and living in the consciousness of His delightful presence.

It is not necessary to be always speaking to God, or always hearing from God, to have communion with Him; there is an inarticulate fellowship more sweet than words. The little child can sit all day long beside its busy mother and, although few words are spoken on either side, and both are busy, the one at his absorbing play, the other at her engrossing work, yet both are in perfect fellowship. He knows that she is there, and she knows that he is all right. So the saint and the Savior can go on for hours in the silent fellowship of love, and he be busy about the most common things, and yet conscious that every little thing he does is touched with the complexion of His presence, and the sense of His approval and blessing.

And then, when pressed with burdens and troubles too complicated to put into words and too mysterious to tell or understand, how sweet it is to fall back into His blessed arms, and just sob out the sorrow that we cannot speak!

"Too tired, too worn to pray,
I can but fold my hands,
Entreating in a voiceless way
Of Him who understands.
"And as the weary child,
Sobbing and sore oppressed,
Sinks, hushing all its wailings wild
Upon its mother's breast,
"So on Thy bosom, I
Would pour my speechless prayer;
Not doubting Thou wilt let me lie
In trustful weakness there."

2. This also includes our communion with one another. "The fellowship of the Spirit" means fellowship in the Spirit with spiritual minds. Thank God for the article in the creed which binds together the Church of

every age and clime, "I believe in the communion of saints."

This must, of course, be first of all, communion in the Spirit. It is not the fellowship merely of natural affection but it is the communion of hearts that have a divine life in common. Of course, it is dearer and closer with those that are dearest to us but, even in the case of our nearest friends, our love must be transformed or it cannot be lasting or bring us into spiritual communion.

Then it is communion in the truth, and the closer our agreement in the truth, the closer will be our communion in the Spirit. Therefore as God leads us on to deeper teachings and higher truths, He intensifies our fellowship.

We can remember the time when we were first saved and were brought at once into the same fellowship with all others that were saved. Our little note was "Jesus saves me," and every saved man was a brother beloved. We just wanted to take him by the hand and tell him we were brothers. But it was just one little in the chorus. It was the soprano, and soprano alone makes very thin music.

After a while we learned the deeper basis of sanctification, and then we got a new note, and a new part to our song. And our music grew richer, and our harmony fuller.

We can remember the first time we met another Christian who had also learned the blessed truth of Christ our Sanctifier. He was not only a brother, but he was doubly a brother. And oh, how delightful it was to find one that could understand our deeper feelings and teachings in the Spirit, and how much closer was our communion in the fullness of the truth!

After a while we added a third part, the triumphant tenor of divine healing, and the Lord's supernatural life in our body. Shall we ever forget the first time we were thrown into the society of those who understood and believed these things? We had been standing alone, misunderstood, misrepresented, perplexed, and as we found some other heart that was treading the same lone way and living in the same blessed experience, it was a threefold chord, and a divine fellowship.

And yet there is one more part in perfect music, the soft suggestive undertone of the alto, that carries our thoughts afar and wakes up the chords of memory and hope. And so we came into the fourth truth of this blessed gospel -- the Coming of our Lord, and the glorious hope of His return. Need I say that this brought a deeper fellowship still with those who stand together in this holy expectation as the waiting Bride of the Lamb? And so God makes us one in the fullness of the truth. Let us not lightly think of any truth which He has given us, or fail to be true to His testimony and our mutual fellowship.

Then again, we have fellowship not only in the truth, but in the life of the Spirit. All the platforms in the world will not make us one without oneness of heart. The fourfold gospel is not any better than the thirty-nine articles without the Holy Ghost. The true secret of Christian union is the baptism of the Spirit and the fullness of the life of Christ in all who believe.

And this is the fellowship of prayer. It makes us sensitive to each other's needs and burdens and it binds us all together, like travelers in the mountains, so that if one falls the others hold him up, and if one suffers all suffer together.

Let us ask God to show us all that this ministry means for us and for His servants; let us each be so "fitly framed" in the body of Christ, that we shall carry upon our hearts the very ones the Spirit would assign to us, and the very burdens which He would have us share with them.

Finally, it is fellowship in service. We are called together for a common testimony and a common work in these last momentous days. It is not accidental that the Holy Spirit has given us a common experience and has led us out in similar lines of truth and life. He is preparing a mighty spiritual movement in these last times for the special preparation of the Master's coming, and we cannot miss His special calling without great loss to ourselves, and great hindrances to His purpose for our lives and for His church.

When God brings into our life a special experience of truth and blessing, we cannot go on as heretofore, but there is always some special ministry and testimony for which we have been prepared, and we are to stand together for the propagation of these present truths, and the help of other lives that need the very blessing that has come to us.

How solemnly some of us feel that if we had faltered in our testimony, when God first spake to us these deeper things, not only should we have lost the best work of our life, but multitudes of other lives might have missed their blessing, too.

Whatever else we do, beloved, let us be true. Let no coward fear, let no compromise with popular opinion and halfhearted respectability make us falter in our high calling, or be faithless to the bonds of fellowship in the little flock that the Master is preparing for His kingdom.

"If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship in the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."

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