

(Power From on High) 19. the Holy Spirit in the Epistles of Paul to Timothy

by A.B. Simpson

The Holy Spirit is the power of God that enables us to live a life of courage, power, love, and wisdom, and to keep our sacred trust.

Scripture: 1 Timothy 3:16 - 4:1, 2 Timothy 1:6-7, 2 Timothy 1:14, 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 2 Timothy 3:16

Topics: "The Holy Spirit", "Empowerment for Service"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the vital role of the Holy Spirit in the letters of Paul to Timothy, illustrating how the Spirit bears witness to Jesus Christ, inspires the Scriptures, and provides guidance for contemporary believers. He highlights the necessity of stirring up the gift of the Holy Spirit within us, which empowers us with courage, love, and wisdom for service. Simpson warns of the perilous times ahead, urging believers to remain vigilant and faithful in their walk with God. He concludes by affirming that the Holy Spirit enables us to keep our sacred trust and fulfill our divine calling.

Transcript

In the pastoral and personal letters of Paul to his son in the gospel, Timothy, we have five important references to the Holy Spirit. We shall consider them in their logical order.

I.

The Holy Spirit in relation to the person and work of Jesus Christ. 1 Timothy 3: 16, "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit."

The reference here is, no doubt, to the witness of the Holy Ghost to the incarnate Son of God. This was given not only by the announcements that preceded his birth, and by the supernatural manifestations of the Holy Ghost that accompanied and followed it, but especially at His baptism, when the Spirit of God publicly descended and abode upon Him, bore witness to His divine Sonship, and united Himself with His person, becoming henceforth the enduement of power for His ministry and work. Henceforth the Holy Ghost continually bore witness to Jesus Christ by manifesting the power of God in His words and work.

It was through the Spirit that He spake His messages; it was through the Spirit that He cast out demons and healed the sick; it was through the Spirit that He offered Himself without spot to God and stood

victorious in the conflict and suffering of the cross; it was through the Spirit that He overcame the power of Satan, not only in the wilderness, but in the final conflict; it was through the Spirit that He presented His perfect sacrifice at the throne of His Father, and it was through the Spirit that He rose from the dead "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

And then the Holy Ghost still further justified His claim, by coming down as He had promised, and taking up the work that He had begun, and bearing witness to the ascended Lord in the ministry of the apostles, in the organization and work of the Church, and in all the miracles of grace that have followed through the Christian age. Jesus is justified by the Spirit, who witnesses to Him as the Son of God, the Savior of the world, and the faithful and true Witness in all His promises and claims.

Wherever the Holy Ghost still comes, He will always be found witnessing to Jesus, and honoring the Son of God.

II.

The Holy Ghost in relation to the Holy Scriptures. 2 Timothy 3: 16, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

The Holy Ghost is here presented in relation to the Word of God. It is His own word and, wherever it comes, He witnesses to it and honors it. The man who knows the Holy Ghost best will know his Bible best, will love it, will live upon it, and will use it as the weapon of his work and warfare.

The expression here used literally means "God-breathed," "every Scripture God-breathed is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." The Holy Scriptures are the breath of God. Just as He breathed into man the breath of life, and man became a living soul, so He has breathed into the Word His own life, and it is the expression of His thought, His mind, and His heart. Just as you breathe upon the window-pane, and the vapor clouds it, so God has breathed upon the page, and lo, His very thought and heart are there, not as dead letters, but as the living message of His love.

We recognize this holy book as the very Word of God. It is not a volume of valuable historical records, ethical principles, and sublime poetry; but it is a direct message from heaven speaking to man with the authority of His Lord; as we so receive it, believe it, and put our whole weight upon it; it becomes real, and the Holy Ghost witnesses by its actual effect upon our hearts and lives that it is, indeed, the true word of the eternal God.

Then it becomes profitable to us; in the first place, for teaching, giving us true views of God's will and of the things we most need to know; next, for conviction, as the word literally means, for reaching the conscience, and showing us where we are wrong. Then it becomes the word of correction, or direction, not only showing us the wrong and making us conscious of it, but showing us the right and how to enter into it. And, finally, it is the word of "instruction in righteousness," building us up, as the word literally means, and carrying us on into the maturity of Christian manhood. Thus the man of God becomes mature in his own experience, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works, for the help of others and the service of His Master.

The man of God must live by the Word of God, and the Holy Ghost never will pass by or lightly esteem the Word that He has given. There are two extremes. The word without the Spirit is dry and dead, but the Spirit without the word is incomplete. Let us honor the Holy Scriptures; let us study them; let us habitually use them, search them, feed upon them, incorporate them into our lives, and use them as the weapon of our warfare against Satan, and for the souls of men.

III.

The Holy Spirit's message for our own times. All this Word is the Spirit's message, but He has given some messages in these epistles explicitly for our own times. And so we read, 1 Timothy, 4:1, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving head to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons."

This is more elaborated in the second epistle, third chapter, the first to the fifth verses. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of their own selves, . . . having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof."

When we want to print a passage with peculiar emphasis we underline it, and our printer sets it up in italics. When we want to emphasize it a little more, we put two or three lines under it and then he sets it up, not in italics, but in capital letters, and sometimes in large capitals.

Now this is the way the Holy Ghost has written these verses. It is His emphatic, italicized, double capital-lettered message to the men of today, to the closing days of the nineteenth century and the first moments of the twentieth century. "He speaketh expressly." It is His message to us, and it is His emphatic message that we do well to hear.

It is not a sentimental and rose-colored message, glowing with poetry and complacency; it is a solemn warning of danger and holy fear. It speaks in no ambiguous tones. Its voice is, "Take heed," "Look out," "Beware." It tells us not of days of universal liberty and Christian influence; it speaks not in the eloquent language of our modern apostles of progress, recounting the spread of the Gospel, the increase of the professors of Christianity and the advent of the speedy Millennium of our age; but it tells us that, as the days hasten to their close, they shall get darker and more dangerous still; not glorious times, but "perilous times"; times of seducing spirits; times of strong delusion that would believe a lie; times when the light within us shall be darkness; times when the most dangerous elements will be in the very Church of God, and on the part of those who have "a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof"; times when the men that seem to be the most upright, the most self-denying, "abstaining from meats, and forbidding to marry," and apparently the very impersonations of self-sacrifice and the highest morality, shall be the very leaders of Satanic delusion and monstrous iniquity.

These times are upon us already. The vista is opening; the century is closing with lurid clouds on every side. Was there ever a spectacle so humbling and so heart-breaking as the heavens are looking upon today? Thousands and tens of thousands of helpless Christians butchered like cattle in the shambles, and outraged by brutal lust, at the bidding of a sovereign ruler of Europe, and with the tacit consent of six great powers who control ten millions of soldiers! All this going on for weeks and months and years, under the light of heaven and the eyes of diplomacy, and men threatening to go to war about every trifle, and not a sword raised, nor a protest uttered, against these outrages and butcheries! Surely, human government is an utter failure. Surely, the best of our kingdoms and kings are as the potter's clay. Surely, weakness and wickedness have joined hands. Surely, God is showing the utter incapacity of man to rule this earth, and

the utter need of the coming of the Prince of Peace and the mighty King, who shall judge the people with righteousness and the poor with judgment. He shall judge the poor of the people, and save the children of the needy, and break in pieces the oppressor. He shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their souls from deceit and violence, and precious shall their blood be in His sight.

Oh, for that blessed King to come! The whole creation groans, the persecuted Armenian cries, and the saints under the altar plead, "How long, oh Lord, how long?" The Spirit speaketh expressly that these things are to be so, and the very fact that they are becoming so is light even in the darkness, and the first streak of dawn in the black sea of night.

Thank God the morning is at hand. Let us listen to the Spirit's voice, let us watch and pray and be ever ready.

IV.

The Holy Spirit as the Christian's endowment for life and service. 2 Tim. 1:6, 7, "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, that is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

Here we have, first, a distinct recognition of the Holy Ghost, definitely given. God hath given the Spirit not of fear, but of power, etc.

The tense employed here in the Greek is always emphatic; it is the aorist tense, and it expresses an act that has been definitely done at a fixed moment in the past. It is not a progressive experience; it is not a gradual approach to something, but it is something done, and done at once, and done once for all. In this sense the Spirit is given. It is the crisis hour in the life of the believer, when the Holy Ghost is thus received as the endowment for life and power in all our spiritual need, and according to all the fullness of the Master's promise.

Beloved, have you thus definitely received the gift and the promise of the Father? Many promises you have claimed, but has the promise been thus made real to you? What reason can you give that it is not so? Oh, do not let another hour pass until at His feet you definitely surrender yourself, and receive Him according to His Word!

But again, we notice that even after receiving the Holy Ghost there is much for the believer to do. And so Timothy is entreated and reminded to stir up the gift of God, which is in him. The word here used is a metaphor, and describes the rekindling of a sinking fire. The flame of divine life and power is declining, or, at least, it is undeveloped and incomplete, and it is to be revived, rekindled, and stirred up.

Now the Holy Ghost when given to us is a divine investment for us to improve, and as we use, develop and improve it, it multiplies in our hands. It is the pound in the parable, which may be increased to ten pounds. It is the pot of oil in the widow's story which may be poured out into all the vessels of the house and all the vessels of the neighborhood, and increased as it is used. It is the water in Cana's vessels which may be emptied into the vessels and poured out to the guests until it becomes wine, abundance of wine, enough for all the needs of the occasion.

The Holy Ghost may thus be stirred up and developed or He may be neglected and left to decline and languish, until, instead of being God's mighty dynamo, and all sufficient power, He becomes but a protest

against our unfaithfulness and our negligence.

Beloved, let us stir up the gift of God that is in us. Let us take away the ashes from the declining fire. Let us put on the coal and the fuel of living truth. Let us set on the draught by prayer, and let it burn until it warms the household of Christ and becomes a light and a benediction to a perishing world. And, as we stir up the gift of God that is in us, it becomes to us the Spirit of power, of love, of courage, and of a sound mind. And so we have the fourfold fullness of the Holy Ghost represented in these strong words.

First, He is not the Spirit of fear, which is just another way of saying that He is the Spirit of courage. We must have courage to begin with, or we shall never be able to press on to any of His other gifts. We must have courage to deny ourselves and suffer, to say "No" to our wills and our craving self-indulgence, and to let go everything that hinders His highest will and our highest blessing.

We must have courage to believe what God says, and to confess that we believe; and we must have courage to go forward and obey His bidding and enter into all fullness.

Secondly, He is the Spirit of power. Courage without power would but throw our lives away. Courage combined with power will make us invincible. The Greek word for power is dynamite. He is the dynamite that accomplishes results, and breaks down all barriers and all hindrances.

Beloved, have you this power? Is your life telling? Are your purposes accomplished? Are your prayers effectual? Are your lives victorious, or are you baffled and thrown back by waves on every shore and by every billow or opposing rock? God hath given us the Spirit of power. Stir it up. It is not your power; it is the Spirit of power. It is the indwelling Holy Ghost. The mighty cable is running beneath your street; attach your ear to it, and it will carry any weight that you place upon it. Power is there, anyhow, and if you do not use it, it only runs to waste.

Thirdly, He is the Spirit of love. Courage without power is ineffectual frenzy, and courage and power without love would be despotic and monstrous cruelty. It needs love to give beneficence to the power and direct it for the good of others. So the Holy Ghost gives us the Spirit of love, which turns all our purposes and all our accomplishments into benedictions. It is not our love. We come to the place continually where we cannot love, but it is His love. It is Almighty love; it is love to the unlovely and distasteful; it is the love which in Him forgave His enemies and prayed for His murderers.

But there is yet another element needed in this four-fold enduement. We need the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of a sound mind, or, as some have translated it, the Spirit of discipline. This is the Spirit that holds all our powers in equilibrium, keeps us in perfect balance, and enables us to turn all forces, all resources and all opportunities to the best account.

Mere power and courage without wisdom might throw themselves away, and even love, without a sound mind, might become a misguided sentiment, and at last defeat its own purpose. And so the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of practical wisdom, restraining, directing, and controlling all our thoughts and purposes and actions, so that we shall accomplish the highest and best results.

Now this is not our wisdom. It is not common sense. It is not a sound judgment and a level head, as men speak. But it is the indwelling Holy Ghost, training us, and disciplining us, restraining us, and educating us to understand His thought, to follow His leadings, and to walk in His will.

It is sometimes different from the counsels of human wisdom; but it is always safe, always best to obey God. The wisdom of Paul and Silas would have led them to stay in Ephesus, Bythnia, and Asia; but the wisdom of the Holy Ghost sent them into Greece and Europe, for God foresaw what it meant to evangelize that great continent of the future. The wisdom of the flesh would have held back almost every bold enterprise of faith and courage which the Church of God has ever made; but the wisdom of God was justified in His children, as they went forward at her bidding, and were strong in God's command.

The Holy Ghost is equal to all our situations. Let us trust Him. Let us obey Him. Let us follow His wise and holy training, and He will lead us in a safe way wherein we shall not stumble.

Now the essence of this endowment consists in the proportion of all its parts. It is not courage alone, nor love alone, nor wisdom alone, nor power alone. Mere wisdom would make us hard and cold, but wisdom set on fire with love and energized by power will enable us to bless the world.

The lion is the emblem of courage; the ox is the symbol of strength; the man is the emblem of love; and the eagle with her soaring vision is the type of wisdom, all blended in the one Spirit of courage and love and of a sound mind.

With such a divine provision, beloved, why should we be afraid? Why should we be feeble? Why should we be harsh, or tried? Why should we be foolish or fail? Let us stir up the gift of God which is in us, and put on the strength, the life, the might of the Holy One, and go forth, insufficient in ourselves but all-sufficient in His boundless grace.

V.

Finally, we have the Holy Ghost represented here as the power Who will enable us to keep our sacred trust. 2 Timothy 1:14, "That good thing which was committed to thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us."

The words, "good thing committed to thee," are the same as the apostle uses in the previous verse, where he speaks of that which "I have committed unto him." Literally, it means, my deposit. There are two deposits; there is one deposit which we have put in the keeping of Christ, and we know He is able to keep it; it is our precious soul; it is our eternal future; it is the momentous interests of our life beyond.

But He has also given a deposit to us. God has invested a trust in us that is as dear to Him as the trust that we have committed to His keeping -- it is His glory; it is His testimony; it is His kingdom on earth, "the good thing which was committed to us." Oh, shall we keep it, and hand it back untarnished and glorious and approved when we shall meet Him?

Thank God, the Holy Ghost is given us to enable us to keep it -- "that good thing which was committed to thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us."

Not only does He take care of His end, but He comes also to take care of ours. Blessed Friend, Blessed Helper, Blessed Substitute, Blessed All-Sufficient One, we receive Thee; we lean upon Thee; we commit to Thee Thy trusts to us, as well as our trusts to Thee; and in Thy wisdom and in Thy might and in Thy love, and in thy All-mightiness, we go forth to finish the work committed to us, to watch and work for our Lord's appearing! Amen.

Source:

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