

(Power From on High) 23. the Holy Spirit in the Epistles of Peter

by A.B. Simpson

The Holy Spirit plays a crucial role in the Epistles of Peter, inspiring, sanctifying, and glorifying believers through their union with Him.

Scripture: John 14:16-17, Romans 8:1-2, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 1:13-14, Hebrews 10:19-22, 1 Peter 1:2-4, 2 Peter 1:21, 1 John 1:7

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Sanctification"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes three key truths about the Holy Spirit as presented in the Epistles of Peter: the Spirit of Inspiration, the Spirit of Sanctification, and the Spirit of Glory. He explains that the Holy Spirit inspired the prophets and ministers, ensuring that their messages were divinely authoritative. The sanctification process is described as a continuous union with the Holy Spirit, leading to obedience and a transformed life. Lastly, the Spirit of Glory is highlighted as a source of joy and strength, especially in times of suffering, allowing believers to experience a foretaste of heavenly glory even in their earthly trials.

Transcript

There are three important truths respecting the Holy Spirit presented in the Epistles of Peter.

I. THE SPIRIT OF INSPIRATION.

In 2 Peter 1:21 we are told that "the prophecy came not by the will of man, but holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." This is a very explicit statement of the doctrine of inspiration. They were not giving their own opinions; they were not writing by the impulse of their own will. Sometimes they said things that were contrary to all their natural preferences and attachments, as for example, when Samuel pronounced his judgment upon the house of Eli, or when Jeremiah uttered his awful warnings against his dearly loved people and country.

But they were "moved by the Holy Ghost." The Greek word 'moved' is a very strong one, and in the Revised Version is translated "borne." They were swept along by a mighty impulse which carried them far beyond themselves. They did not always even understand their own predictions, for in 1 Peter 1:10, we are told that "the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify,

when It testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

Daniel tells us that he heard but understood not, his own vision. Sometimes they saw the vision of a glorious King, sometimes of a bleeding Lamb. But they did not always fully comprehend what it all meant, nor when it was all to be fulfilled. It loomed before them as a glorious vista of far reaching promise, but there was many a cloud upon the vision, and all they clearly knew was that "not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister" these wondrous revelations of truth.

In the next verse the apostle speaks of the Holy Ghost, not only in the message of the prophets, but in the message of the ministers of the gospel, as these truths are now preached unto us by the ambassadors of Christ, "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." The ancient prophet was the organ of the Spirit, but the minister of the gospel has the very presence and person of "the Spirit sent down from heaven," accompanying his message and giving authority and power to his word; so that when we speak the message of God, we speak in the very name of God, and those who hear are responsible for rejecting or receiving, not the word of man, but the very word of the living God.

II. THE SPIRIT OF SANCTIFICATION.

1 Peter 1: 2, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." The Apostle Peter fully believed in the sovereignty of God, and in the divine purpose of election ; but he did not believe in any foreordination apart from personal sanctification. The truth is, there are two ends to the divine purpose. On yonder side the cable is fastened to the throne, and hidden from our view is the inscrutable and inaccessible light of God; but on this side the cable of divine mercy is within our reach, and we may fasten it around our own hearts through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, so that we may make our calling and election sure, and know that we belong to the heavenly family.

The word "through" should rather be translated "in" sanctification. Holiness is the element and atmosphere of the divine calling, and as we are found there we must be inseparably linked with Him; and apart from this spiritual condition, we have no right to rest in any theological dogma or ecclesiastical form. Let us leave the theology of it to God, and let us make the practical application sure.

Let us carefully notice the form of expression here used. It is not sanctification by the Spirit, but sanctification of the Spirit. There is a great difference. Sanctification by the Spirit might leave us crystalized into a sanctified state, like the wax when the stamp is withdrawn, or like the clock wound up to go by its own machinery. But sanctification of the Spirit is not a self-constituted state, but a sanctification which consists in our union with the Spirit, and makes and keeps us dependent upon His indwelling life and power every moment. We are not sanctified apart from Him, but only as we are filled with Him, and abide in Him continually. We are but the vessel, an empty shell which He must fill, and keep ever freshly filled by "the renewing of the Holy Ghost."

The Greek genitive expressed by the preposition 'of' indicates the most intimate connection between our sanctification and our possession of the Holy Ghost. Beloved, have we the Spirit as our Sanctifier and our Life? Have we something more than holiness, even the Holy One Himself to "dwell in us and walk in us," and ever "cause us to keep His statutes and judgments and do them?"

Again, the sanctification of the Spirit brings us the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." Now, the blood of Jesus Christ means the life of Jesus Christ, and the life of Christ has always a twofold application. First,

the life of Christ was given for us through the shedding of His blood and the atonement of His death on Calvary. But the life of Christ is also given to us by His union with us and abiding in us.

This latter sense is the one covered by the "sprinkling of the blood." We read in the twenty-fourth chapter of Exodus, that when Moses was about to take the leaders of Israel up into the mount, he offered sacrifices of oxen, slaying the bullocks and pouring out half of their blood upon the altar, thus signifying the shedding of Christ's blood for us in the offering of His sacrifice upon the cross. But the other half of the blood he took in basins and carried it up unto the Mount, sprinkling part of it upon the people and the book of the covenant; and, thus sprinkled with blood and accompanied by the blood, they went up into the very presence of God, and were received into His love and favor. Instead of the thunders and lightnings which yesterday made Mount Sinai a scene of terror, the blue heavens without a cloud covered them as a celestial dome, and Jehovah received them into His presence chamber, feasted them as princely guests at a royal banquet, and, it is added, "upon the nobles of Israel he laid not His hand; but they did eat and drink, and they saw God."

Now, the sprinkled blood in this beautiful type is quite different from the shed blood poured out upon the altar; it represents the life of Christ imparted to us, and making us fit for His presence and fellowship. This is the work of the Holy Ghost. He brings us into living union with the person of Jesus and reproduces in us the very life of Christ.

We believe this is the meaning of the strong expressions used so often respecting the life and blood of Jesus. We are said to be "saved by His life." Again, the "blood of Jesus Christ His Son," that is, the life of Jesus Christ, "cleanseth us, or keeps cleansing us from all sin." So again, in the sixth of John, it is by eating His flesh and drinking His blood that we have eternal life, and that life is nourished from day to day. Beloved, do we know the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, and are we living upon His life?

There is another beautiful type in the Old Testament throwing much precious light upon this striking figure. It is the account of the red heifer in the nineteenth chapter of the Book of Numbers. We will pass by the other applications of this remarkable type, and refer only to the sprinkling of the water of separation. When any one in the camp of Israel had become defiled by the touch of the dead, or by contact with uncleanness in any way, it was provided that he should be cleansed and restored by sprinkling with the water of separation. This water was made out of the ashes of the heifer that had been sacrificed and then burned, and preserved in a sacred place for this purpose. Water was poured upon it and then, with a bunch of hyssop, the unclean person was sprinkled and cleansed.

Now, we know that the water which you make out of ashes is known as lye, and it is pungent and cutting in its operation as caustic or fire. The sprinkling that came in this way upon the unclean would not be likely to be forgotten. It was a cleansing that would cut to the core, and burn to the bone. And so the work of the Holy Ghost is not always soft and complacent, but often most searching and consuming. He brings home to our hearts the application of the death of Christ, until it takes us into actual fellowship with His death, and makes us also willing to die to the sinful or selfish thing which He has revealed in our natural life.

There is, therefore, a sense in which the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost is at once immediate and progressive. There is a moment in which we actually enter into personal union with Jesus and receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost. In that moment we are fully accepted, and are fully sanctified up to all the light we have. But as the light grows deeper and clearer He leads us farther down, and farther on, at once revealing and healing every secret thing that is contrary to His perfect will, as we are able to bear it, and

bringing us into perfect conformity to the very nature and life of Christ.

It is somewhat like the operation of the limestone brook upon the wooden branch that is left lying in the flowing stream. Day by day, the limestone held in solution is deposited in the open fibers of the wood, until after a while the wood has been changed to stone and, while retaining its natural form, its substance has been transformed into the nature of the stone. So there is a sense in which the Holy Ghost holds the life of Jesus Christ in a kind of solution, and imparts it to us, until we become perfectly conformed to the very image of our glorious Pattern and Head.

Once more, the sanctification of the Spirit leads to "obedience." It is not all theory and experience, but it is intensely practical and real. It runs into our daily lives in the home, the factory, and the store. It makes us better men and women, and compels the world to testify to its genuineness and reality. And then it becomes so easy. It is not the obedience of effort, but the spontaneous and joyful outflow of life and love. He not only dwells in us, but He also walks in us. "And what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh," "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," does accomplish, "making us free from the law of sin and death, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

III. THE SPIRIT OF GLORY.

1 Peter 4:14, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." The work of the Holy Ghost is more than cleansing. It is also glorifying. He comes not only to make our garments white, but lustrous, like the transfiguration light and the marriage robe.

In the ancient tabernacle there were three sections. The first represented salvation; it was the Court where the worshiper came to the altar and the laver for the atoning blood and the cleansing water. The second was the Holy Place, the chamber where the priests had their home, and where they dwelt with God amid the light of the golden lamps, feeding upon the sacred bread and frankincense, and breathing the fragrant odors that arose in clouds of incense from the golden altar of intercession. This represented sanctification, communion, fellowship, the life of abiding in personal union with the Lord Jesus Christ. But there was another chamber farther in. It was the Holy of Holies, the sacred presence chamber of God, where the Shekinah glory shone between the outstretched wings of the heavenly cherubim. This was God's image of the glory. This represents, of course, the future glory of our heavenly home and the millennial day for which we are waiting. But This also represents the beginning of that glory into which we may enter now. For the Holy Ghost is the earnest of our future inheritance, and He brings its fore-gleams and foretastes to us here.

That inner chamber, in the days of Moses, was shut off from view. Only the high priest might enter it, and he but once a year. But the veiling curtains were rent asunder when Jesus died, and the glory was opened wide for us to enter in. And so we read the divine invitation, "Having, therefore, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living Way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." Yes, we may enter into the glory even here. "The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them," is our Savior's parting bequest. Not only does He give us His peace and His love, but He gives us His glory, too, and into its heavenly radiance we may enter now. "Whom having not seen, we love, in whom though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." "Not only so, but we glory in tribulations also." "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon

you."

It is difficult, if not impossible, to make this intelligible to any one who has not been initiated into the alphabet of heavenly things. It needs spiritual senses and instincts to comprehend it. But almost every child of God has at one time or other, been touched with some thrill from the Spirit of glory. Perhaps it lighted up the closet of prayer until it became the gate of heaven. Perhaps it touched your sorrow with a light that transfigured the night into morning and the shadow of death into the light of heaven. Perhaps it came when Jesus healed your body and gave you the first fruits of the resurrection. Perhaps it comes to you sometimes when you sit and think of the cross behind you, the Christ within you, and the home before you, and you scarcely know whether you are in the body or out of the body. But the blessed Spirit is ready to bring it to us just where we need it most.

It would seem as if its congenial sphere was the place of suffering, persecution and reproach. It would seem as if, when earth's barometer goes down to the lowest point, heaven's sunburst always comes most brightly through the tempest clouds. It is "in tribulation" "we glory"; it is "when reproached in the name of Christ" that "the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon us."

But let us be very sure that we are reproached "in the name of Christ," as the passage should be translated. Let us not suffer, as the passage suggests, because of our own foolishness or sin, as transgressors or busybodies. But, standing in the name of Christ, living in His high and holy character, representing Him and resembling Him, let us not fear if trials come, and storms of sorrow fall. The cloud will be but His background for the rainbow. The pillar that loomed by day as an enshrouding mist, will glow by night like a celestial fire;

"And sorrow touched by God grows bright

With more than rapture's ray,

As darkness shows us worlds of light

We never saw by day."

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