

A Word to Workers

by Andrew Murray

The Holy Spirit is the key to a deeper understanding and experience of Christ, and believers must seek to be filled with Him in order to be effective in their ministry and lead others to the same experience.

Scripture: John 14:16

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Empowerment in Ministry"

Description

Andrew Murray emphasizes the vital role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a minister and the church, asserting that a clergyman's first duty is to ensure that what he desires for his congregation is first realized in himself. He stresses that true ministry flows from a life filled with the Holy Spirit, enabling ministers to lead their congregations to seek the same experience. Murray highlights the importance of personal experience in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, as it empowers believers to live out their faith authentically. He calls for a deeper acknowledgment of the Holy Spirit's presence and power in the church, urging ministers to guide their congregations towards this transformative experience. Ultimately, he encourages a humble and continuous seeking of the Holy Spirit to fulfill God's promises in their lives and ministries.

Transcript

Some time ago I read this expression in an old author: --"The first duty of a clergyman is humbly to ask of God that all that he wants done in his hearers should first be truly and fully done in himself." These words have stuck to me ever since. What a solemn application this is to the subject that occupied our attention in previous chapters--the living and working under the fullness of the Holy Spirit! And yet, if we understand our calling aright, every one of us will have to say, That is the one thing on which everything depends. What profit is it to tell men that they may be filled with the Spirit of God, if, when they ask us, "Has God done it for you?" we have to answer, "No, He has not done it"? What profit is it for me to tell men that Jesus Christ can dwell within us every moment, and keep us from sin and actual transgression, and that the abiding presence of God can be our portion all the day, if I wait not upon God first to do it truly and full day by day?

Look at the Lord Jesus Christ; it was of the Christ Himself, when He had received the Holy Ghost from heaven, that John the Baptist said that "He would baptize with the Holy Ghost." I can only communicate to others what God has imparted to me. If my life as a minister be a life in which the flesh still greatly prevails--if my life be a life in which I grieve the Spirit of God, I cannot expect but that my people will receive through me a very mingled kind of life. But if the life of God dwell in me, and I am filled with His

power, then I can hope that the life that goes out from me may be infused into my hearers too.

We have referred to the need of every believer being filled with the Spirit; and what is there of deeper interest to us now, or that can better occupy our attention, than prayerfully to consider how we can bring our congregations to believe that this is possible; and how we can lead on every believer to seek it for himself, to expect it, and to accept of it, so as to live it out? But, brethren, the message must come from us as a witness of our personal experience, by the grace of God. The same writer to whom I alluded, says elsewhere:-- "The first business of a clergyman, when he sees men awakened and brought to Christ, is to lead them on to know the Holy Spirit." How true! Do not we find this throughout the word of God? John the Baptist preached Christ as the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world;" we read in Matthew that he also said that Christ would "baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire." In the gospel by John, we read that the Baptist was told that upon Whom he would see the Spirit descending and abiding, He it was who would baptize with the Spirit. Thus John the Baptist led the people on from Christ to the expectation of the Holy Ghost for themselves. And what did Jesus do? For three years, He was with His disciples, teaching and instructing them; but when He was about to go away, in His farewell discourse on the last night, what was His great promise to the disciples? "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth." He had previously promised to those who believed on Him, that "rivers of living water" should flow from them; which the Evangelist explains as meaning the Holy Ghost: --"Thus spake He of the Spirit." But this promise was only to be fulfilled after Christ "was glorified." Christ points to the Holy Spirit as the one fruit of being glorified. The glorified Christ leads to the Holy Ghost. So in the farewell discourse, Christ leads the disciples to expect the Spirit as the Father's great blessing. Then again, when Christ came and stood at the footstool of His heavenly throne, on the Mount of Olives, ready to ascend, what were His words? "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto Me." Christ's constant work was to teach His disciples to expect the Holy Spirit. Look through the Book of Acts, you see the same thing. Peter on the day of Pentecost preached that Christ was exalted, and had received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost; and so he told the people; "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." So, when I believe in Jesus risen, ascended, and glorified, I shall receive the Holy Ghost.

Look again, after Philip had preached the gospel in Samaria, men and women had been converted, and there was great joy in the city. The Holy Spirit had been working, but something was still wanting; Peter and John came down from Jerusalem, prayed for the converted ones, laid their hands upon them, "and they received the Holy Ghost." Then they had the conscious possession and enjoyment of the Spirit; but till that came they were incomplete. Paul was converted by the mighty power of Jesus who appeared to Him on the way to Damascus; and yet he had to go to Ananias to receive the Holy Ghost.

Then again, we read that when Peter went to preach to Cornelius, as he preached Christ, "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word;" which Peter took as the sign that these Gentiles were one with the Jews in the favour of God, having the same baptism.

And so we might go through many of the Epistles, where we find the same truth taught. Look at that wonderful epistle to the Romans. The doctrine of justification by faith is established in the first five chapters. Then in the sixth and seventh, though the believer is represented as dead to sin and the law, and married to Christ, yet a dreadful struggle goes on in the heart of the regenerate man as long as he has not got the full power of the Holy Spirit. But in the eighth chapter, it is the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" that maketh us free from "the law of sin and death." Then we are "not in the flesh, but in the Spirit,"

with the Spirit of God dwelling in us. All the teaching leads up to the Holy Spirit.

Look again at the epistle to the Galatians. We always talk of this epistle as the great source of instruction on the doctrine of justification by faith: but have you ever noticed how the doctrine of the Holy Spirit holds a most prominent place there? Paul asks the Galatian church: --"Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" It was the hearing of faith that led them to the full enjoyment of the Spirit's power. If they sought to be justified by the works of the law, they had "fallen from grace." "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." And then at the end of the fifth chapter, we are told: --"If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit."

Again, if we go to the epistles to the Corinthians, we find Paul asking the Christians in Corinth: --"Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" If we look into the epistle to the Ephesians, we find the doctrine of the Holy Spirit mentioned twelve times. It is the Spirit that seals God's people; "Ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." He illumines them; "That God may give the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." Through Christ, both Jew and Gentile "have access by one Spirit unto the Father." They "are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." They are "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." With "all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love," they "endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." By not "grieving the Holy Spirit of God," we preserve our sealing to the "day of redemption." Being "filled with the Spirit," we "sing and make melody in our hearts to the Lord," and thus glorify Him. Just study these epistles carefully, and you will find that what I say is true--that the apostle Paul takes great pains to lead Christians to the Holy Ghost as the consummation of the Christian life.

It was the Holy Ghost Who was given to the church at Pentecost; and it is the Holy Ghost Who gives Pentecostal blessings now. It is this power, given to bless men, that wrought such wonderful life, and love, and self-sacrifice in the early church; and it is this that makes us look back to those days as the most beautiful part of the Church's history. And it is the same Spirit of power that must dwell in the hearts of all believers in our day to give the Church its true position. Let us ask God then, that every minister and Christian worker may be endued with the power of the Holy Ghost; that He may search us and try us, and enable us sincerely to answer the question, "Have I known the indwelling and the filling of the Holy Spirit that God wants me to have? Let each one of us ask himself: "Is it my great study to know the Holy Ghost dwelling in me, so that I may help others to yield to the same indwelling of the Holy Spirit; and that He may reveal Christ fully in His divine saving and keeping power?" Will not every one have to confess: "Lord, I have all too little understood this; I have all too little manifested this in my work and preaching"? Beloved brethren, "The first duty of every clergyman is to humbly ask God that all that he wants done in his hearers may be first fully and truly done in himself." And the second thing is his duty towards those who are awakened and brought to Christ, to lead them on to the full knowledge of the presence and indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Now, if we are indeed to come into full harmony with these two great principles, then there come to us some further questions of the very deepest importance. And the first questions is: --"Why is it that there is in the church of Christ so little practical acknowledgment of the power of the Holy Ghost?" I am not speaking to you, brethren, as if I thought you were not sound in doctrine on this point. I speak to you as believing in the Holy Ghost as the third person in the ever-blessed Trinity. But I speak to you confidently as to those who will readily admit that the truth or the presence and of the power of the Holy Ghost is not acknowledged in the church as it ought to be. Then the question is: Why is it not so acknowledged? I answer because of its spirituality. It is one of the most difficult truths in the Bible for the human mind to

comprehend. God has revealed Himself in creation throughout the whole universe. He has revealed Himself in Christ incarnate--and what a subject of study the person, and word, and works of Christ form! But the mysterious indwelling of the Holy Spirit, hidden in the depths of the life of the believer, how much less easy to comprehend!

In the early Pentecostal days of the church, this knowledge was intuitive; they possessed the Spirit in power. But soon after the spirit of the world began to creep into the church and mastered it. This was followed by the deeper darkness of formality and superstition in the Roman Catholic Church, when the spirit of the world completely triumphed in what was improperly styled the Church of Christ. The Reformation in the days of Luther restored the truth of justification by faith in Christ; but the doctrine of the Holy Ghost did not then obtain its proper place, for God does not reveal all truth at one time. A great deal of the spirit of the world was still left in the reformed churches; but now God is awakening the church to strive after a fuller scriptural idea of the Holy Spirit's place and power. Through the medium of books, and discussions, and conventions many hearts are being stirred.

Brethren, it is our privilege to take part in this great movement; and let us engage in the work more earnestly than ever. Let each of us say my great work is, in preaching Christ, to lead men to the acknowledging of the Holy Spirit, who alone can glorify Christ. I may try to glorify Christ in my preaching, but it will avail nothing without the Spirit of God. I may urge men to the practice of holiness and every Christian virtue, but all my persuasion will avail very little unless I help them to believe that they must have the Holy Ghost dwelling in them every moment enabling to live the life of Christ. The great reason why the Holy Spirit was given from heaven was to make Christ Jesus' presence manifest to us. While Jesus was incarnate, His disciples were too much under the power of the flesh to allow Christ to get a lodgement in their hearts. It was needful, He said, that He should go away, in order that the Spirit might come; and He promised to those who loved Him and kept His commandments, that with the Spirit, He would come, and the Father would also come, and make Their abode with them. It is thus the Holy Spirit's great work to reveal the Father and the Son in the hearts of God's people. If we believe and teach men that the Holy Spirit can make Christ a reality to them every moment, men will learn to believe and accept Christ's presence and power, of which they now know far too little.

Then another question presents itself, viz , What are we to expect when the Holy Spirit is duly acknowledged and received? I ask this question, because I have frequently noticed something with considerable interest--and, I may say, with some anxiety. I sometimes hear men praying earnestly for a baptism of the Holy Spirit that He may give them power for their work. Beloved brethren, we need this power, not only for work, but for our daily life. Remember, we must have it all the time. In Old Testament times, the Spirit came with power upon the prophets and other inspired men; but He did not dwell permanently in them. In the same way, in the church of the Corinthians, the Holy Spirit came with power to work miraculous gifts, and yet they had but a small measure of His sanctifying grace. You will remember the carnal strife, envying, and divisions there were. They had gifts of knowledge and wisdom, etc.; but alas! Pride, unlovingness , and other sins sadly marred the character of many of them. And what does this teach us? That a man may have a great gift of power for work, but very little of the indwelling Spirit. In 1 Cor. xiii, we are reminded that though we may have faith that would remove mountains, if we have not love, we are nothing. We must have the love that brings the humility and self-sacrifice of Jesus. Don't let us put in the first place the gifts we may possess; if we do, we shall have very little blessing. But we should seek, in the first place, that the Spirit of God should come as a light and power of holiness from the indwelling Jesus. Let the first work of the Holy Spirit be to humble you deep down in the very dust, so that

your whole life shall be a tender, broken-hearted waiting on God, in the consciousness of mercy coming from above.

Do not seek large gifts; there is something deeper you need. It is not enough that a tree shoots its branches to the sky, and be covered thickly with leaves; but we want its roots to strike deeply into the soil. Let the thought of the Holy Spirit's being in us, and our hope of being filled with the Spirit, be always accompanied in us with a broken and contrite heart. Let us bow very low before God, in waiting for His grace to fill and to sanctify us. We do not want a power which God might allow us to use, while our inner part is unsanctified. We want God to give us full possession of Himself. In due time, the special gift may come; but we want first and now, the power of the Holy Ghost working something far mightier and more effectual in us than any such gift. We should seek, therefore, not only a baptism of power, but a baptism of holiness; we should seek that the inner nature be sanctified by the indwelling of Jesus, and then other power will come as needed.

There is a third question: --Suppose some one says to me: --"I have given myself up to be filled with the Spirit, and I do not feel that there is any difference in my condition; there is no change of experience that I can speak of. What must I then think? Must not I think that my surrender was not honest?" No, do not think that. "But how then? Does God give no response?" Beloved, God gives a response, but that is not always within certain months or years. "What, then, would you have me do?" Retain the position you have taken before God, and maintain it every day. Say, "Oh God, I have given myself to be filled, here I am an empty vessel, trusting and expecting to be filled by Thee." Take that position every day and every hour. Ask God to write it across your heart. Give up to God an empty, consecrated vessel that He may fill it with the Holy Spirit. Take that position constantly. It may be that you are not fully prepared. Ask God to cleanse you; to give you grace to separate from everything sinful--from unbelief or whatever hindrance there may be. Then take your position before God and say, "My God, Thou art faithful; I have entered into covenant with Thee for Thy Holy Spirit to fill me, and I believe Thou wilt fulfil it." Brethren, I say for myself, and for every minister of the gospel, and for every fellow worker, man or woman, that if we thus come before God with a full surrender, in a bold, believing attitude, God's promise must be fulfilled.

If you were to ask me of my own experience, I would say this: --That there have been times when I hardly knew myself what to think of God's answer to my prayer in this matter; but I have found it my joy and my strength to take and maintain my position, and say: "My God, I have given myself up to Thee. It was Thine own grace that led me to Christ; and I stand before Thee in confidence that Thou wilt keep Thy covenant with me to the end. I am the empty vessel; Thou art the God that fillest all." God is faithful, and He gives the promised blessing in His own time and method. Beloved, for God's sake, be content with nothing less than full health and full spiritual life. "Be filled with the Spirit."

Let me return now to the two expressions with which I began: "the first duty of every clergyman is humbly to ask of God that all that he wants done in those who hear his preaching may be first truly and fully done in himself." Brethren, I ask you, is it not the longing of your hearts to have a congregation of believers filled with the Holy Ghost? Is it not your unceasing prayer for the Church of Christ, in which you minister, that the Spirit of holiness, the very Spirit of God's Son, the spirit of unworldliness and of heavenly-mindedness, may possess it; and that the Spirit of victory and of power over sin may fill its children? If you are willing for that to come, your first duty is to have it yourself.

And then the second sentence: --"the first duty of every clergyman is to lead those who have been brought to Christ to be entirely filled with the Holy Ghost." How can I do my work with success? I can conceive

what a privilege it is to be led by the Spirit of God in all that I am doing. In studying my Bible, praying, visiting, organizing, or whatever I am doing, God is willing to guide me by His Holy Spirit. It sometimes becomes a humiliating experience to me that I am unwatchful, and do not wait for the blessing; when that is the case, God can bring me back again. But there is also the blessed experience of God's guiding hand, often through deep darkness, by His Holy Spirit. Let us walk about among the people as men of God, that we may not only preach about a book, and what we believe with our hearts to be true, but may preach what we are and what we have in our own experience. Jesus calls us witnesses for Him; what does that mean? The Holy Ghost brought down to heaven from men a participation in the glory and the joy of the exalted Christ. Peter and the others who spoke with Him were filled with this heavenly Spirit; and thus Christ spoke in them, and accomplished the work for them. O brethren, if you and I be Christ's we should take our places and claim our privilege. We are witnesses to the truth which we believe--witnesses to the reality of what Jesus does and what He is, by His presence in our own souls. If we are willing to be such witnesses for Christ, let us go to our God; let us make confession and surrender, and by faith claim what God has for us as ministers of the gospel and workers in His service. God will prove faithful. Even at this very moment, He will touch our hearts with a deep consciousness of His faithfulness and of His presence; and He will give to every hungry, trustful one that which we continually need.

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