

# li Peter 1:4

by Asa Mahan

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of the promises in 2 Peter 1:4, which pledge to our faith a total emancipation from all evil and a full possession of all good, and it highlights the conditions for receiving these promises and the state of entire and permanent sanctification.*

**Scripture:** Romans 8:11, 2 Corinthians 1:20, Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 3:19, Hebrews 6:12, 2 Peter 1:3

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Renewal"

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## Description

Asa Mahan preaches about the importance of embracing the promises of the new covenant and the power of the Holy Spirit in transforming believers. He emphasizes the need for believers to seek the baptism of the Holy Ghost to experience a renewal of their nature and a vital union with Christ. Mahan highlights the difference between believers who remain in their old propensities and those who fully surrender to Christ, allowing Him to work in them and fill them with His Spirit. He challenges individuals to move beyond mere faith to a deep oneness with Christ, leading to a life of obedience, joy, and victory over sin.

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## Transcript

Let us tarry for a few moments under the shadow of the great revelation before us, while I shall endeavor to set before the reader the views of truth and the way of life opened upon my mind as I continued to reflect upon this wonderful utterance: "Whereby," that is, as the verses preceding show, "through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." In this knowledge, "divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that bath called us to glory and virtue." We think of the holy and godly life required of us in the Scriptures. Everything requisite to the full realization of that life in our experience is conferred upon us as a gift of grace, through the revelation of God in Christ. In knowing Christ, and the Father in and through Christ, we have all the knowledge, and all the forms and sources of influence and power, requisite to our being, becoming, and doing all that is required of us, and to assure for ourselves all the good that "God hath prepared for them that love Him."

In addition to all this, there are given to us specific promises, "promises exceeding great and precious." "What are divine promises?" I asked. In every such promise, as I at once perceived, God designates some specific blessing requisite to our purity, peace, fullness of joy, or highest usefulness as His servants; and absolutely pledges every attribute of His nature to grant us that blessing, whenever by faith He is "inquired of by us to do it for us." We trusting God to do for us what is pledged in the promise, He must do it for us, or be false to His own word and to His own divine nature. "What then is the creature to do?" I asked again.

First of all, the answer was, he is to acquaint himself with the promise, that is, with what it really means, and then go directly to the throne of grace and ask the Father, in the name of Christ, to do for us just what He has pledged to our faith in the promise. When we thus ask, we must "ask in faith, nothing wavering," "counting Him faithful that hath promised," not "staggering at the promise through unbelief," and that on account of its vastness or littleness, and never "limiting the Holy One of Israel." Doubting His promise, we in our hearts "make God a liar." Limiting His promise, that is, expecting to obtain less than what is specified in God's plighted word, we call in question both His power and His grace. Neglecting the promise, we "judge ourselves unworthy of eternal life," and part with our birthright as the sons of God.

But these promises are not only specific, but "exceeding great and precious." The view which I then received of their exceeding greatness and preciousness -- that view being of necessity at the time a very limited one -- has continued to grow and expand before my mind from that time to the present, and, no doubt, will continue thus to grow and expand to eternity. What strikes the mind as very peculiar about these promises is, not merely their greatness and preciousness, but their absolute completeness. In them, every want, demand, and necessity of our mortal and immortal natures is distinctly specified, and to each want a pledge is given to our faith of the specific good which is fully adapted to meet that want in the best possible manner. Negatively, they pledge to our faith a total emancipation from all that would be to us a real evil, and positively all that would be to us a real good, and that the best possible. "No evil shall befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." "I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil."

This is the negative side of the promises. Positively they pledge to our faith all the possession of which would be to us a real good, and that in its best possible form. "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." Such are the promises on their positive side, and they descend to particulars, and specify the evil and the good in all their specific forms, and absolutely pledge to our faith absolute freedom from the one and the full possession of the other. Standing in the presence of the promises, as they shine out in the bright firmament of divine revelation, we can say with absolute assurance, "All things are ours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are ours, and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Nothing but unbelief in us can prevent our total protection, not against all seeming, but against all real evil, on the one hand; and our actual possession, not of all apparent, but real good, on the other; and this not only for life, but for an eternity to come. While the promises present to our faith that which will fully meet each specific want as we apprehend it, they are so worded as to indicate, in every case, that "there is more to follow," and that we are authorized to expect "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

The apostle now specifies two fundamental purposes for which "the promises were given, and towards which they all in common, tend, -- "that by these," that is, by believing in and trusting God's fidelity in all His promises, and by faith seeking and expecting their fulfillment in our experience, "we might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." The words, "the divine nature," imply, as all will admit, not only the holiness and blessedness of the divine mind, but also that divine disposition or nature in God which induces His holiness and blessedness. For us to become possessed of this "divine nature" implies not only present holiness and blessedness such as God possesses, but a divine disposition in us, a new and divine nature, which induces and prompts us to

holiness, just as God's nature prompts Him to the same. In our old or unrenewed state, we not only sinned, but had a nature or dispositions which prompted us to sin. In Christ, we not only obey the divine will, but receive from Him, as the Mediator of the new covenant, a new or "divine nature," which prompts us to purity and obedience, just as our old dispositions prompted us to sin.

When, by faith, we have "obtained the promises," it becomes just as natural in us to obey as it once was to rebel, just as natural and easy to be lovingly quiet and forgiving as it was to be angry and revengeful when injured or provoked, -- to bless, as it was to imprecate retribution when reviled, -- to return good, as it was to return evil for evil received; -- to be "content with such things as we have," as it was to "be careful and troubled about many things;" in short, to bring forth "the fruits of the Spirit "-- "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," as it once was to do "the works of the flesh."

We can now understand clearly the difference in the conditions and relations of the believer before and after the promises of the new covenant have been fulfilled in his experience. An individual, we will suppose, has, through the Spirit, been convicted of sin, and has exercised genuine "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." As far as his voluntary activities are concerned, he is now in a state of supreme obedience to the will of God. His old propensities, dispositions, temper, and tendencies, however, remain as they were, and remain to war against this new-born purpose of obedience. If the convert is left here, just where the mass of them are left under the teachings they commonly receive -- if the convert is left here, what, I ask, will be his future experience? Nothing, I answer, but the loss of his first love, the dying out of his primal joys, and sad falls and lapses, with periods of rejoicing and victories few and far between. It is infinite presumption to expect better results under such circumstances. And this is just what we do witness in the general experience of the Church. Open and gross immoralities excepted, the convert carries with him into the Christian life the same propensities, dispositions, and temper that he had before his conversion, and these, when strongly excited, overcome him as they did before. How absurd for a believer, in such circumstances, to "reckon himself dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Suppose, on the other hand, that the convert, instead of being left in this perilous position, is fully taught the provisions and promises of the new covenant, and is led to apprehend Christ as the Mediator of that covenant. The convert now, in the exercise of a strong faith, "inquires of Christ to do this for him." What does Christ do? First of all, "He baptizes the convert with the Holy Ghost," and "endues him with power from on high" for the exigencies of his new life. The Spirit, in the fulfilment of His mission, enters upon the work of universal renovation. He accordingly "takes the heart of stone out of the convert's flesh, and gives him an heart of flesh," -- "gives him a new heart and a new spirit," "writes the law upon his inward parts, and puts it in his heart," "circumcises his heart to love the Lord his God with all his heart and with all his soul," renders him a "partaker of the divine nature," "takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto him," "reveals Christ in him," so that "he beholds with open face the glory of the Lord, and is changed into the same image from glory to glory," and is "filled with all the fullness of God," consummates a vital union between him and Christ, so that Christ is in him, as the Father is in the Son, and thus "blesses him with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," and "abundantly furnishes him for every good work."

This all-cleansing, all-renovating, and all-vitalizing process the apostle calls "the renewing of the Holy Ghost." Our salvation is commenced with "the washing of regeneration," and is consummated by "the renewing of the Holy Ghost." Into what new relations does the convert enter when he has passed through

the first state, and entered into all the light, and privileges, and enduements of power of the second? He is now "delivered from his enemies," and may "serve God without fear, in righteousness and holiness before Him, all the days of his life." With "the old man crucified," imbued with a new and "divine nature," "filled with the Holy Ghost," and with "the power of Christ resting upon him," he may, with all assurance, "reckon himself dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ His Lord." When Christ, as "the Mediator of the new covenant," comes to believers, He says to the old propensities, dispositions, tempers, and lusts, the old man which once held them in bondage, "Let my people go, that they may serve me." When that "old man," with his hosts of affections and lusts, pursues after God's people to bring them back into their former bondage, that old tyrant, with all his armed host, is overwhelmed and lost in the Red Sea of Christ's blood. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." What a melancholy reflection it is that most believers advance no further in the Christian life than "the washing of regeneration," are ignorant of Christ as the Mediator of the new covenant, and, consequently, have no experience of "the renewing of the Holy Ghost"! P>But let me by no means be understood as teaching sanctification by faith, as distinct from and opposed to sanctification by the Holy Spirit, or Spirit of Christ, or which is the same thing, by Christ our sanctification, living and reigning in the heart. Faith is rather the instrument or condition, than the efficient agent that induces a state of present and permanent sanctification. Faith simply receives Christ, as king, to live and reign in the soul. It is Christ, in the exercise of his different offices, and appropriated in his different relations to the wants of the soul, by faith, who secures our sanctification. This he does by Divine discoveries to the soul of his Divine perfections and fulness. The condition of these discoveries is faith and obedience.

Now this idea arises out of the very obscure notions, that people have with regard to what constitutes entire sanctification. They seem to suppose, that in sanctification, the Holy Spirit changes the nature, so that men remain holy without any further influence from the Spirit of Christ. Whereas, a state of entire and permanent sanctification is nothing else, than a state of entire and perpetual dependence on Christ, and on the Holy Spirit. It is the state in which the mind throws itself entirely upon the supporting grace of Christ.

Again: there is a very high and important sense in which every moral being will remain on probation to all eternity. While under the moral government of God, obedience must for ever remain a condition of the favour of God. And continued obedience will for ever depend on the faithfulness and grace of God; and the only confidence we can ever have, either in heaven or on earth, that we shall continue to obey, must be founded upon the faithfulness and truth of God.

Why is it, reader, if such is your state, that God has not "circumcised your heart to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul"? Why has He not "put His law in your inward parts, and written it in your heart"? Why has He not "sprinkled clean water upon you," and rendered you "clean"? Why has He not "cleansed you from all your filthiness, and from all your idols"? Why has He not "taken the stony heart out of your flesh, and given you a heart of flesh," and "caused you to walk in His statutes," and to "keep His judgments, and do them"? Why has He not "sanctified and cleansed you," so that when your iniquities shall be searched for, there shall be none, and your sins, and they shall not be found"? Why has not God "put His Spirit within you," "endued you with power from on high," and thus "filled you with all the fullness of God"? But one answer can be given to these questions, provided you have not yet thus attained. The Lord your God has not "for this been inquired of by you to do it for you;" you have riot "hearkened unto the voice of the Lord your God," obeyed His will, believed His Word, "laid hold of His covenant," and "searched for Him with all your heart and with all your soul." This is your sin, on account of which you "walk in darkness and have no light," groan in "bondage under the law of sin and death," and are shut out

from "fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." If now you will believe God's word, trust His grace, "lay hold of His covenant," "inquire of Him to do these things for you," and "search for Him with all your heart and with all your soul," "He will be found of you," and you will find all His "exceeding great and precious promises" fulfilled in your experience, and He will do exceeding abundantly for you above all that you ask or think." "But if you will not believe, you will not be established."

It is perfectly evident that two forms of genuine Christian experience are presented to our consideration in the subject before us; that the element of supreme obedience, hearkening to the voice of God, obeying His will, and seeking Him "with all the heart, and with all the soul," characterise each state alike, and that the one is conditional and preparatory to the other. When we "return unto the Lord, and obey His voice with all our heart and with all our soul," we are in one state. When the Lord our God has circumcised our hearts to love the Lord "with all our heart and with all our soul," we must be in another and different state, or the promise is without meaning. We are surely in one state and relation to God when we are "searching for Him with all our hearts," and in another and different state and relation to Him when we have "found Him," He coming to us, and "dwelling in us, and walking in us," as our God, and we having fellowship with Him as "His sons and daughters." When we are "inquiring of God" to do for us what is promised in the new covenant, we are in one state. We are certainly in quite another and different state when God, in fulfilment of the provisions and promises of that covenant, has "put His law in our inward parts, and has written it in our hearts," has "cleansed us from all our filthiness and all our idols," has "taken away the stony heart out of our flesh and given us an heart of flesh," and has "put His Spirit within us" that is, "baptized us with the Holy Ghost." No candid mind will question the truth of the above statements.

But what are the provisions and promises of this new covenant? As far as they include "the promise of the Spirit" the most essential element of the covenant -- on this part of the subject I shall not now speak, having said already all that is needful here. What, then, do the words, "take the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you an heart of flesh," mean? What can they mean but a fundamental change and a renewal of our propensities? We are "by nature children of wrath," "prone to evil as the sparks are to fly upward." When God does for us what is provided for and promised to us in the new covenant, we have "a new heart" and "a new spirit," "a divine nature, which impels us to love and obedience, just as our old nature impelled us to sin.

As preparatory to a clear understanding of this subject, let us consider the following statements of the apostle. "Now, the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Behind all these forms of sin, "works of the flesh," lie certain propensities, dispositions, and tempers, which, when touched by corresponding temptations, set on fire burning and "warring lusts" and evil passions, and these induce the sins and crimes above designated. Suppose, now, that these old propensities, dispositions, and tempers are taken away, and, in this state, new ones of an opposite nature are given; in other words, that "the heart of stone is taken out of our flesh," and in its stead there is "given us heart of flesh." Under our renovated propensities, and new dispositions, tendencies, and tempers, or "divine nature," it becomes just as easy and natural for us to bear "the fruits of the Spirit," as it was, under our old ones, to work "the works of the flesh." Here, then, we perceive clearly what is provided for, and promised to, our faith in the new covenant, what Christ, as the Mediator of that covenant, promises to do for us when He is "inquired of by us to do it for us," and what He will commission the Spirit to work in us when He shall "baptize us with

the Holy Ghost" .

With the above exposition accords all the teachings of the New Testament upon this subject. The "exceeding great and precious promises" are given us for the revealed purpose that "by these" -- that is, by embracing these promises by faith -- we "might be partakers of the DIVINE NATURE, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." "By nature" -- that is, under the influence of our old nature, or propensities, dispositions, and tempers,"we are "children of wrath," and "bring forth fruit unto death." Under the dispositions, tempers, and tendencies of our new or "divine nature," we are just as naturally "children of God," and "have our fruit unto holiness," while "the end is everlasting life." Why are we called upon to "reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord"? Because "our old man," our old propensities, dispositions, and tempers, is crucified, "put to death" with Him, that the "body of sin," our old and evil nature, "might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Our old nature, or propensities, dispositions, and tempers, the apostle calls "the body of this death," and thanks God, as we all should, that, "through Jesus Christ our Lord," we are delivered from this "body of sin and death" .

Christ sets us free, putting within us, in place of that law, "the law of the Spirit of life." The same doctrine the apostle obviously teaches in the following passage: -- "So, then, they that are in the flesh (under the dominion of their natural propensities) cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh (under its control), but in the Spirit (under His control), if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. But if Christ be in you, the body," that is, the body of sin of which the apostle has been exclusively speaking thus far, "is dead, because of sin; but the Spirit," that is, the new nature or spirit which Christ gives, "is life," lives and reigns within us, "because of righteousness."

To Christians he says, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Such language implies more than this, that his old propensities, "the body of sin," "the old man," is yet living and warring in the soul, but, by the grace of Christ, are held in subjection. Mere subjection is not death. What the apostle undeniably intended to teach is this: that his propensities, dispositions, and temper had been so renovated that the world, with its affections and lusts, had no more power over him than they have over the dead. Christ, on the other hand, lived in him, and occupied all his affections, and held undisputed control over all his activities. Some important suggestions and reflections here present themselves.

I am here reminded of a very melancholy fact which we often meet with among professing Christians. I refer to those who persistently shut themselves out from "the liberty of the sons of God," and veil from their hearts "the light of God," in which it is their blood-bought privilege to walk. Before I speak particularly of this class, however, let me refer to another class who are in darkness, but are seeking "the light of life." By special request, I once, for example, visited the room of a theological student who was spiritually in "a horror of great darkness." Before him lay an open Bible, with his eyes resting upon some of its most soul-moving revelations.

"President Mahan," he said, "what is here revealed is all real to you. No wonder, therefore, that you are one of the happiest of men. To me, however, they don't seem real at all. I read that 'Christ tasted death for every man,' and Paul says of Him, 'He loved me, and gave Himself for me.' It don't seem to me that I have any interest at all in Christ's death, or that He has any love for me whatever. I can understand Job when he cried out, 'Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come near even to His seat. Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand that I cannot see Him.' Is there any

hope for me?"

As I took my seat by the side of that young man, I said to him, "My brother, you are now in the most hopeful condition possible. If you will 'only believe,' your next step will be upon the pinnacle of the delectable mountains, where 'the Lord shall be to you for an everlasting light, and your God your glory.' 'Only believe,' and you will find the darkness around you to be that which precedes the brightness of the divine rising."

"But how shall I believe, when nothing seems real to me?"

"God says, in His own Word, does He not, that 'Christ did taste death for every man,' and consequently for you; that He loves the world, and consequently loves you; that if you will 'confess your sins,' He 'will forgive you your sins, and cleanse you from all unrighteousness;' that He 'will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him,' and that none that 'follow Christ shall walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'"

"I know that God says these things, and I suppose they are realities in themselves. To me, however, they are not realities, and I cannot make them appear so."

"Cease for ever now all efforts to make these realities seem real to your mind. Admit them to be such, and that on the simple testimony of God. Confess your sins to God, trusting Christ, for the reason that He says He will do it when you thus confess, to 'take away your sins.' Having done this, and having surrendered your whole being to the divine will, ask your Father in heaven, simply because He has promised to do so to all who ask, to give you the Holy Spirit of promise, that you may realize and 'know the things which are freely given you of God.' Do this, my young brother, and your darkness will soon pass away, and you will wonder, with unutterable wonder, at the marvellous light of God which shall shine upon you."

I have, during the last forty years, met with very many individuals, as that young man was, in the deepest spiritual darkness, and have never yet met with one who has followed such simple counsels, and who did not soon find him self "sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," and "rejoicing there with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

I will here give a single example in illustration of the above statements. Several months since, I met at the house of a mutual friend in this city a physician and his wife, both from my own country, and both influential members of a leading Presbyterian church in the city of New York. Mrs S. was in a very peculiar and self-dissatisfied state of mind. She had read, as she stated, the productions of the leading writers on the higher life, had honestly endeavoured to follow the directions given therein, and had supposed that she had attained to the state of which such authors and teachers speak; yet she had found herself mistaken. What was called salvation from sin, she had found to be nothing but the substitution of one form of sin for another still more hateful in the sight of God spiritual pride. She had, accordingly, repudiated wholly this whole doctrine of the higher life.

Such had been her spiritual darkness, however, that when they were in Rome she had inquired of the highest authorities there whether there was for her any way out into "the light of God." Their answers were, of course, wholly unsatisfactory and she was in a state of almost utter hopelessness in regard to any escape from "the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God," of which the Bible says so much. I assured her that the Bible was a lie throughout, or this liberty, in all its fullness, was in reserve for her. Christ had prayed for her that she might be one with Him, as He is one with the Father, and that the Father might, consequently, love her as He loves His only begotten Son; and that prayer

would be fulfilled in her experience, provided she would "lay hold on the hope set before her."

The oneness with Christ referred to is called in the Bible "the union and fellowship of the Spirit." We "are builded for an habitation of God through the Spirit." It is through the Spirit that "God dwells in us and walks in us," and "reveals His Son in us." We must be "strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man," or Christ cannot "dwell in our hearts by faith," and be "formed within us the hope of glory." "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" and there is, and can be, this liberty nowhere else. Such, and only such, do or can behold "with open face, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord." "In that day," the day when "the Comforter shall come unto you," says our Savior, "ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you." "The promise of the Spirit" is before you. If you desire this vital union with Christ, and with the Father through Him, having committed your whole being to Christ, ask Him, and trust Him, first of all, "to pray the Father for you, that He may "give you the Comforter," that "He may abide with you forever," and, as God is true, He will "endue you with power from on high," and "fill you with His Spirit," as He did "the disciples at the beginning;" and then, as they were, you "shall be filled with all the fullness of God."

"The mistake, as it seems to me," I remarked, "of very many who teach the doctrine of the higher life, is the fact that they do not set forth, as the immutable condition of entering into and continuing in that life, that we must receive 'the promise of the Spirit in our hearts.'" I then told her how that, having sought and obtained "the promise of the Father," I had for forty years "walked with God," and known Him as my "everlasting light." "Among 'the sons and daughters of the Lord,'" I remarked, "I am no specially privileged believer. What I have obtained and enjoyed, you may obtain and enjoy."

Such is the substance of my statements to this individual. After a season of prayer we separated, she with a fixed "purpose of heart" never to rest until she had obtained the promised baptism, and I with a fervent inward prayer that God would grant her what she desired, and, through the power of His indwelling Spirit, "do for her exceeding abundantly above all that she might ask or think." The following extracts from this lady's letter, received by the wife of the mutual friend referred to, will indicate the results of that conversation: -- "Within three days of our return," she says, "the Doctor's father was brought down to our house very feeble, and suffering with heart disease. For five weeks I nursed him night and day. . . . December 6, he went home. . . . Before I had any time to rest, I came here Philadelphia, to my mother to spend Christmas, and to help to cheer her through this, to her, sad part of the year; for a year ago, last night, my own father entered into glory. Two more peaceful death-beds than the two I have stood beside this year could never be, and heaven seems nearer and more real from the lessons I have been taught by them."

Out of sorrow into "everlasting consolations and good hope through grace" is the fixed order of true Christian experience. "Never shall I forget," she goes on to say, "that Sabbath evening which I spent with Dr. Mahan. I wonder if he is yet in London? If so, will you give my love to him, and tell him Jesus has been making plain to me what I so vainly tried to comprehend during that conversation. Never in my life have I seen what a soul-union there might be between the believer and his Savior as the Lord has shown me of late. 'One with Christ' does not seem too strong language now. I am so glad that I am one of the weak foolish ones of the earth; for I have not had the trouble which I should have in trying to come to an intellectual comprehension of how this could be. I cannot tell the 'how' even now but I do know that Christ has taken me in a sense He never did before, and is keeping me very close to Himself. Oh, how my very heart goes out for you to know this great treasure, my dear sister! It seems as though, if I could cross the ocean that divides us and sit by your side, I could show you from the Word how much more Jesus has for us than either you or I imagined last September. I begin to have a little taste of that 'love which passeth

knowledge,' and it makes my heart bound and ache with the longing I have that others should know it too. . . . I owe so much to you for your kindness in regard to Dr Mahan. I have never been satisfied since the talk we had in your parlour. I saw, and you did also, that he had a secret we did not possess."

She then states that she soon became conscious of the defects I had stated in the very common teachings in regard to the higher life, and then adds, -- "A strong faith is not enough; there must be a filling with love. I do not know how to express it except as a conscious 'oneness with Christ.' I cannot tell you as I would like to of this dear Jesus; but if you look into your Bible, you will find what I mean on almost every page of the Acts and Epistles. Now that I really believe every promise, just as I would promises from any reliable, loving friend, the whole thing seems plain and unmistakable. I did not intend to write as I have done when I began, but what was in my heart has dropped off from my pen." All who thus seek, find; and of all who do thus seek and find, "there is not a weak nor sickly one among them." All in common are "more than conquerors through Him that hath loved them."

How do individuals shut themselves out from this "everlasting light," and from all this "glorious liberty of the sons of God"? When they are spoken to about "the promise of the Spirit," and of "the glory which follows" this "endowment of power from on high," their reply is, "that all Christians receive the promised 'baptism of the Holy Ghost,' at the time of their conversion, and no such promise as you speak of is in reserve for us now." While they reply thus, they will not deny that they are in darkness, and walk in darkness, and have lost "the blessedness they knew when first they saw the Lord." Whatever the past may have been, do they not now need to be "baptized with the Holy Ghost"? They admit that they "can neither fly nor go to reach eternal joys." Do they not need the "endowment of power," by which they can "mount up on wings as eagles," and "run and not be weary, and walk and not faint"? Still their reply is, "All believers were 'baptized with the Holy Ghost' at the time of their conversion, and they now 'have the Spirit of Christ,' and their 'bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost.'"

But does not Christ make prior obedience the express condition of the reception of "the Comforter," and does not the Bible as expressly teach that God "gives the Holy Ghost to them that obey Him"? Does not inspiration speak expressly of two classes of converted persons, -- of the one class as "spiritual," and the other as "yet carnal," -- the one as made, and the other as not yet made, "perfect in love, -- the one as having, and the other as not having, "fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, -- the one as having received, and the other as not having received, the Holy Ghost since they believed -- and of the "joy" of the one class as being, and of the other as not being, "full"? Still the reply is, "All believers do receive 'the baptism of the Holy Ghost' at the time of their conversion, and no such promise as you speak of is in reserve for us." Thus individuals plead and argue for their blindness, and darkness, and feebleness, their bondage under the law of sin and death, and their barrenness of spiritual joy and power, as if they were certain that "life eternal" is to be found in these things and nowhere else. How can they find the light of life when they thus turn away from God's "exceeding great and precious promises," and will not accept the testimony of God, on the one hand, and that of those who have believed, and "have entered into rest," on the other!

We can now understand clearly the difference in the conditions and relations of the believer before and after the promises of the new covenant have been fulfilled in his experience. An individual, we will suppose, has, through the Spirit, been convicted of sin, and has exercised genuine "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." As far as his voluntary activities are concerned, he is now in a state of supreme obedience to the will of God. His old propensities, dispositions, temper, and tendencies, however, remain as they were, and remain to war against this new-born purpose of

obedience. If the convert is left here, just where the mass of them are left under the teachings they commonly receive -- if the convert is left here, what, I ask, will be his future experience? Nothing, I answer, but the loss of his first love, the dying out of his primal joys, and sad falls and lapses, with periods of rejoicing and victories few and far between. It is infinite presumption to expect better results under such circumstances. And this is just what we do witness in the general experience of the Church. Open and gross immoralities excepted, the convert carries with him into the Christian life the same propensities, dispositions, and temper that he had before his conversion, and these, when strongly excited, overcome him as they did before. How absurd for a believer, in such circumstances, to "reckon himself dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Suppose, on the other hand, that the convert, instead of being left in this perilous position, is fully taught the provisions and promises of the new covenant, and is led to apprehend Christ as the Mediator of that covenant. The convert now, in the exercise of a strong faith, "inquires of Christ to do this for him." What does Christ do? First of all, "He baptizes the convert with the Holy Ghost," and "endues him with power from on high" for the exigencies of his new life. The Spirit, in the fulfilment of His mission, enters upon the work of universal renovation. He accordingly "takes the heart of stone out of the convert's flesh, and gives him an heart of flesh," -- "gives him a new heart and a new spirit," "writes the law upon his inward parts, and puts it in his heart," "circumcises his heart to love the Lord his God with all his heart and with all his soul," renders him a "partaker of the divine nature," "takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto him," "reveals Christ in him," so that "he beholds with open face the glory of the Lord, and is changed into the same image from glory to glory," and is "filled with all the fullness of God," consummates a vital union between him and Christ, so that Christ is in him, as the Father is in the Son, and thus "blesses him with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," and "abundantly furnishes him for every good work."

This all-cleansing, all-renovating, and all-vitalizing process the apostle calls "the renewing of the Holy Ghost." Our salvation is commenced with "the washing of regeneration," and is consummated by "the renewing of the Holy Ghost." Into what new relations does the convert enter when he has passed through the first state, and entered into all the light, and privileges, and enduements of power of the second? He is now "delivered from his enemies," and may "serve God without fear, in righteousness and holiness before Him, all the days of his life." With "the old man crucified," imbued with a new and "divine nature," "filled with the Holy Ghost," and with "the power of Christ resting upon him," he may, with all assurance, "reckon himself dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ His Lord." When Christ, as "the Mediator of the new covenant," comes to believers, He says to the old propensities, dispositions, tempers, and lusts, the old man which once held them in bondage, "Let my people go, that they may serve me." When that "old man," with his hosts of affections and lusts, pursues after God's people to bring them back into their former bondage, that old tyrant, with all his armed host, is overwhelmed and lost in the Red Sea of Christ's blood. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." What a melancholy reflection it is that most believers advance no further in the Christian life than "the washing of regeneration," are ignorant of Christ as the Mediator of the new covenant, and, consequently, have no experience of "the renewing of the Holy Ghost"!

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