

To Ministers of the Gospel of All Denominations. [#9]

by Charles Finney

Ministers must be baptized with the Holy Ghost to be spiritually effective and qualified for their work.

Scripture: Luke 11:13, John 7:38-39, John 14:26, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:4, Romans 8:26-27, 1 Corinthians 2:4-5, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 5:18, 2 Timothy 1:7

Topics: "Baptism Of The Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Empowerment"

Description

Charles Finney emphasizes to ministers of the gospel the critical need for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, arguing that true spiritual influence and effectiveness in ministry come not from intellectual attainment but from the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. He points out that many ministers, despite their education, lack the spiritual depth and understanding necessary for their calling, similar to the Apostles before Pentecost. Finney urges ministers to seek this baptism, as it is essential for promoting true spirituality and sanctification within the Church. He expresses concern that without this focus, the Church remains in darkness, and the effectiveness of ministry is severely compromised. Ultimately, he calls for a paradigm shift in how preparation for ministry is viewed, prioritizing spiritual empowerment over mere academic qualifications.

Transcript

BELOVED BRETHREN:

In my last, I observed that I had some things I wished to say to ministers, on the necessity of their being baptized with the Holy Ghost. I begin by saying, that to me it seems very manifest, that the great difference in ministers in regard to their spiritual influence and usefulness, does not lie so much in their literary and scientific attainments as in the measure of the Holy Spirit which they enjoy. The Apostles appear to have been entirely different men, after the baptism of the Holy Ghost, from what they were before. They had been converted and called to the ministry, and enjoyed the personal instructions of Christ, previous to His death, and yet they remained amazingly ignorant and ill qualified for the work to which they were called, until they were baptized by the Holy Ghost at the day of Pentecost. This baptism did not by any means, respect principally the working of miracles as some seem to have supposed, for they possessed the power of working miracles before. But its main design and bearing was, to fill them with light, and love, and power in preaching the gospel. And, as I said, after this baptism they appear to have been in almost every respect entirely different men from what they were before.

Now it seems that there are many ministers in the Church at the present time, who have been converted, and perhaps called to the ministry, who have never received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, because they have never believed that any such thing was attainable, nor looked for or expected it. They have had the gospel, with but a slight measure of the Holy Spirit, just as the Apostles had had the personal instruction of Christ, but with so little of the Spirit's influences as never to have understood and felt its power. They are, therefore, as much in the dark, and as poorly qualified for the work to which they are called, as the Apostles were previous to the day of Pentecost. Now the thing which they need, and must have before they will have power with God or man, is the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Without this, they will for ever remain in the dark in regard to the spiritual wants of the Church. And however learned, philosophical, metaphysical, logical, or if you please, theological, their sermons may be, they will always be wide of the mark, and never meet the necessities of the Church until they are baptized with the Holy Ghost. They need to be set apart to the work by the anointing of God. They may have been called, but not anointed, because they have not sought the anointing. They are in some measure prepared intellectually, but scarcely at all spiritually for their work. Hence they know not what to say, to elevate the standard of piety among Christians. Many of them can produce conviction in the Church; but how few of them as a matter of fact, succeed in promoting the work of sanctification in the Church.

Beloved brethren, take it not amiss that I speak thus plainly. I speak in love, and, as I trust, in the bowels of Jesus Christ. Do you, as a matter of fact, promote the spirituality of your churches?

A great deal is said about a thorough preparation for the ministry, at the present day. And certainly there cannot be too much said upon the importance of such preparation; but do permit me to ask, what in fact constitutes a thorough preparation for the ministry? Is it a mere college and theological education? By no means. These are important; but they are far from constituting the principal part of a thorough education. Indeed they are as nothing, when compared with the importance of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The Apostles were for the most part unlearned in the worldly acceptation of that term, and yet, a more efficient class of ministers never existed. And what great numbers, both of ministers and laymen, unlearned in human science, have been among the most efficient and powerful ministers and laymen in the Church of God; while, for the most part, men that have been the most famed for human learning, have been in a great measure inefficient and useless in the Church of God. This by no means proves, that human learning is unimportant; but it does prove, beyond all gainsaying, the paramount importance of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. I would therefore repeat, with great emphasis, what I said at first, that the difference in the efficiency of ministers, does not consist so much in the difference of intellectual attainments as in the measure of the Holy Spirit which they enjoy. And how abundantly do the facts that lie right upon the face of the Church's history, demonstrate the truth of the assertion. I do not hesitate to say, that whatever the age or the learning of a minister may be, he is a mere child in spiritual knowledge, experience, and qualifications for his office, without the baptism of the Holy Ghost. He certainly will, and must for ever remain so. Until he knows what it is to be "filled with the Spirit," "to be led by the Spirit," "to be endued with power from on high," to fulfill his high and responsible functions; he is a mere child, and by no means qualified to be a leader in the Church of God.

A thousand times as much stress ought to be laid upon this part of a thorough preparation for the ministry, as has been. Until it is felt, acknowledged, and proclaimed upon the house-tops, rung through our halls of science, and sounded forth in our theological seminaries, that this is altogether an indispensable part of the preparation for the work of the ministry, we talk in vain and at random, when we talk of the necessity of a thorough preparation and course of training.

I must confess, that I am alarmed, grieved, and distressed beyond expression, when so much stress is laid upon the necessity of mere human learning, and so little upon the necessity of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. What are we coming to? Of what use would ten thousand ministers be without being baptized with the Holy Ghost? Ten thousand times ten thousand of them would be instrumental neither in sanctifying the Church nor in converting the world. There is so little said, so little preached, so little thought upon this subject, that the Church are in a great measure in the dark, in respect to what constitutes a thorough preparation for the ministry. Consequently, when they employ young men from our colleges and theological seminaries, they take it for granted, that they have engaged a minister who has taken a thorough course, and is well furnished for his work. But alas! how sadly, and almost universally, are they disappointed. They find, after all, as a matter of fact, that he is spiritually inefficient, in bondage to sin and lust, and is but a mere babe in Christian experience.

Now I am sure, that I do not say this to rail; but in the grief and anguish of my heart. It is a solemn truth, to which the testimony of the great mass of the churches can unequivocally be given.

And now, dearly beloved, unless ministers will wake up to this subject, unless they will seek and obtain this baptism for themselves, unless they will preach it to the churches, unless this truth be insisted upon through the whole course of education, unless a thousand times greater stress be laid upon it, both in theory and in practice, than has been, we multiply the number of ministers in vain. Numbers will but increase the janglings, and strifes, and party zeal, and darkness, and spiritual death, of the Church of God. I might appeal to the experience of all the churches in the land, in confirmation of what I say.

Your brother in the bonds of the gospel,

C.G.FINNEY

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