

Metaphorical Representations of Perfect Love

by Daniel Steele

The sermon explores the concept of the baptism of the Holy Ghost and its relationship to entire sanctification, Christian perfection, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Matthew 7:11, Luke 11:13, John 14:15, Acts 2:1, Acts 10:44, Acts 19:2, Galatians 4:6, 1 John 2:27

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Sanctification"

Description

Daniel Steele preaches about the importance of attaining full assurance of faith and sanctification, emphasizing the need for believers to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit for a distinct and instantaneous transition to a higher plane of Christian experience. He highlights the significance of love towards Christ, obedience, and the abiding presence of the Comforter in believers' lives, leading to entire sanctification and Christian perfection. Steele draws from biblical examples, such as the disciples at Pentecost and Cornelius' household, to demonstrate the normality and necessity of receiving the Holy Spirit for spiritual empowerment, purification, and communion with God.

Transcript

1. The Dove Descending and Abiding.

Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, in her admirable essay on "Primitive Christian Experience," uses the following language: --

"The advantages to the Christian Church in setting before it distinct points of attainment, are very nearly the same in result as the advantages of preaching immediate regeneration in preference to indefinite exhortation to men to lead sober, righteous, and godly lives. It has been found, in the course of New England preaching, that pressing men to an immediate and definite point of conversion, produced immediate and definite results; and so it has been found among Christians, that pressing them to an immediate and definite point of attainment will, in like manner, result in marked and decided progress. For this reason it is, that, among the Moravian Christians, where the experience by them denominated full assurance of faith was much insisted on, there were more instances of high religious faith than in almost any other denomination.

Here is sound philosophy, founded on facts corroborated by Mr. Wesley in his wide range of observation:-- "Wherever the work of sanctification increased, the whole work of God increased in all its branches." In 1765 he found in Bristol fifty less members than he left before. He thus accounts for this decline: -- "One

reason is, that Christian perfection has been little insisted on; and wherever this is not done, be the preacher ever so eloquent, there is little increase either in the numbers or grace of the hearers." When a definite point is presented to the believer as attainable immediately, all the energies of the soul are aroused and concentrated. Prayer is no more at random. There is a target set up to fire at. Faith as an act -- a voluntary venture upon the promise -- puts forth its highest energies and achieves its greatest victories.

But just here some people find a difficulty. They do not dispute the philosophy, but they question the fact that to believers there is in the New Testament such a distinct point, such a definite line to be crossed. They say that they fail to find in the apostolic Church any instance of such a sudden transition in the spiritual life of the justified soul. It is said that after regeneration there is a gradual development of the new life, with no instantaneous uplifts such as are insisted on by the modern apostles of the higher life. It is the purpose of this chapter to show not only numerous instances of an instantaneous uprising to a higher plane of Christian experience, but that this was the normal development of the spiritual life of primitive Christians. We proceed to show that the baptism of the Holy Ghost is identical with the blessing of perfect love.

St. Paul, in one of his missionary tours, encountered Judaizing teachers who affirmed that those who would be good Christians must be good Jews, obeying all the Levitical law. This question was carried up to Jerusalem to be decided by a council of the apostles and elders. After much discussion, Peter arose and gave an account of his preaching:- "A good while ago God made choice among us that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the Gospel and believe; and God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." Peter refers to his preaching to Cornelius and his staff at his headquarters in Cesarea. On another occasion he declares: "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them as on us at the beginning," that is, on the day of Pentecost, at the beginning of "the kingdom" of the Holy Ghost," as John Fletcher styles it. The apostles were then filled, which is the same as being baptized, with the Holy Ghost, for it was the fulfilment of the promise, "But ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." The conclusion is inevitable, that the baptism of the Holy Ghost includes the extinction of sin in the believer's soul as its negative and minor part, and the fullness of love shed abroad in the heart as its positive and greater part; in other words, it includes entire sanctification and Christian perfection.

Let us more clearly trace the successive steps by which we come to this conclusion. Christ promised that when he should be glorified the disciples should receive a blessing which they could not receive while his bodily presence remained with them'. John 7:38, 39. That blessing was not the forgiveness of sins, for Jesus was daily dispensing pardon. It was a blessing of an abiding and aggressive nature, making believers to be as fountains whence should flow forth "rivers of living water." Thus much is determined by this passage, that there is a blessing distinct from pardoning grace, and there is an indefinite interval between them. It remains now to show that this second blessing involves entire sanctification. The proofs are: 1. The account of the fullness of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, ten days after the Lord Jesus ascended to his glorified state. Acts 1 and 2. 2. Peter's declaration (Acts 11:15, 16) that the effusion of the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius and his company was the same in character and effect as the outpouring at the Pentecost. 3. Peter's incidental remark in Acts 15:9, that the Holy Ghost came to Cornelius and his house in his office of the Sanctifier, "Purifying their hearts by faith." The last text is an incontrovertible demonstration that the fullness of the Spirit is a synonym for entire sanctification. Since there are but two

forces which can sway the soul, the flesh and the Spirit, to be completely filled with either is to exclude the other. To be filled with the Spirit is to be completely emancipated from the flesh, or inherent depravity. To be but partially swayed by the Spirit is to afford a foothold in the soul for a contest between these antagonistic powers. Gal. 5:17.

It remains to be proved that Cornelius and his staff, or house, whose hearts "were purified by faith" in the Spirit baptism, were previously in a justified state. We have the testimony of the Spirit of inspiration that he was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, (military household,) which gave much alms to the people, and prayed always." Peter, under the inspiration of the Spirit, and standing in the presence of Cornelius and his house, asserts, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him" -- "through Christ, though he knew him not," says Wesley most truly. To be accepted with God is to be justified by God. There was no conviction of sin produced under Peter's discourse in Cesarea, no account that these pious Gentiles "were pricked in their heart," nor was there any outcry, "Men and brethren, what shall ye do." They were ready to receive the Holy Ghost, hence the correctness of the inference made by the Council at Jerusalem: "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." Acts 11:18. The reception of the Holy Spirit in his fullness presupposes their previous repentance unto life. On the day of Pentecost so great was the manifestation of spiritual power that the believers in Christ were instantly and completely filled without the instrumentality of preaching, and unbelievers during the sermon of Peter were rapidly transformed into penitent believers, ready to submit to any test of the genuineness of their faith: even to be publicly baptized in the hated name of that Jesus whom they had personally insulted and crucified. The finishing stroke of this rapid transformation was "the gift of the Holy Ghost," with its fruits -- unselfishness, oneness of spirit, "gladness and singleness of heart." But generally there was a brief interval between conversion and the baptism of the Spirit.

The people of Samaria were first converted under the preaching of Deacon Philip; "and when they believed, they were baptized, both men and women." Having never been brought into personal contact with Jesus, and having never offered personal insult to him, water baptism is not made the test of the sincerity of their repentance, so that they were regenerated before that ordinance was used. The successive steps through which they passed were, attention to the word, faith, great joy -- implying a change of heart -- and baptism with water. [See Ellicott on Eph. 1:13 and Alford on Gal. 1:16.] Afterward Peter and John were sent down from Jerusalem for the special work of leading the converts on to Christian perfection. They held a special meeting. They prayed with them that they might receive the Holy Ghost, and they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost, not only as the giver of special gifts, but also as a distinct and permanent spiritual endowment. Says Dr. Whedon, "They received the Holy Ghost in his miraculous and extraordinary manifestation, not merely sanctifying but charismatic. They had doubtless been regenerated by that Spirit before their baptism, in his secret and ordinary power and operation."

The Apostle Paul found at Ephesus "certain disciples." He asked them a question which seems greatly out of place if there is no distinct work of the Holy Spirit after justification: "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" Acts 19:2. We admit that there is no word "since" in the Greek text, and that there may be no allusion to time in this passage, which may be rendered: "Have ye believing received the Holy Ghost?" Reading the question even in this form, making the *pisteusantes* a participle of means -- "by believing" and not of time -- "since believing," or "having believed," (Ellicott) -- there is nothing gained on the part of those who deny a second and distinct work of the Holy Spirit; for there lies plainly on the

surface of this question the implication that Christian discipleship is not a proof, *prima facie*, of "receiving the Holy Ghost." If discipleship implies this blessing, St. Paul asked an absurd question when he thus catechised the twelve justified and baptized Ephesian disciples. [See Ellicott on Eph 1:13 and Alford on Gal. 1:16.] The question propounded by St. Paul at the very first salutation was probably the interrogatory put to every convert to Christ who had been converted by the instrumentality of some other person. Ignorant of his spiritual state, and fearing that he might not have received "the greatest gift that man can wish or Heaven can send," he asks this all-important question: "Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?" Should the great Apostle arise from the dead and come into our Churches today, we doubt not that this would be his first question. We are not so sure that he would not be more surprised by the answer of multitudes, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost," as a permanent indweller in the hearts of believers, although they have all their lives heard the apostolic blessing, in which the "communion of the Holy Ghost" is the crowning grace of that benediction. This would be because of its not being set forth as a distinct attainment -- a prize set before each, to be grasped by faith.

We understand that the baptism, the anointing, the fullness, the abiding, the indwelling, the constant communion, the sealing, the earnest, of the Holy Spirit, are equivalent terms, expressive of the state of Christian perfection. Wherever these terms occur, the Spirit of inspiration is pointing to that state of serene rest, that unbroken peace, that repose in the blood of Christ, that unwavering trust in God, that deliverance from fleshly desire, and that eradication of inbred sin, which come from being "filled with all the fullness of God." This great blessing is the constant theme of the Apostle Paul, especially in his later epistles. He exhorts all to be filled with the Spirit; he prays for believers that they "may know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; that Christ may dwell in their hearts." St. Paul was a practical man, and never wasted his time in urging the impracticable, in inciting to the unattainable. According to Meyer the ordinary sequence of blessings is (a) Hearing, (b) Faith, implying preventing and saving grace; (c) Baptism; (d) Communication of the Holy Spirit. Compare together Acts 2: 37, 38, (a, c, d;) 8:6, 12, 17, (a, b, c, d;) 19:5, 6;(c, d.) Acts 10:44, (d, c,) and perhaps 9:17, are exceptional cases. The reason for the seeming blending of the baptism of the Holy Ghost with regeneration in exceptional instances in the Acts of the Apostles is to be attributed to the fact that the regenerate were urged to the immediate attainment of this great blessing, so that they did attain it with the interval of only a brief period. A similar experience was that of Rev. John Fletcher, who seems to have been born into the kingdom with such a grasp of faith that he apprehended Jesus Christ as his complete Saviour a very few days afterward. In the days of John Wesley, where this privilege was held up to the young convert by the preachers, and exemplified by many believers, there are instances of the attainment of perfect love within a day or two after Justification. "The next morning I spoke severally with those who believed they were sanctified. There were fifty-one in all--twenty-one men, twenty-one widows or married women, and nine young women or children. In one of these the change was wrought three weeks after she was justified; in three, seven days after it; in one, five days; and in S. L., aged fourteen, two days only." --Wesley's Journal, August 4, 1762.

Please observe how minute and searching Wesley was in his investigations into this subject. No naturalist in pursuit of a scientific truth could be more patient and painstaking in the collection of facts from which to make his induction. Wesley may well be called the spiritual Bacon.

Again, two days afterward, he says of another Society, "Many believed that the blood of Jesus Christ had cleansed them from all sin. I spoke to these, forty in all, one by one. Some of them said they received the blessing ten days, some seven, some four, some three days after they found peace with God, and two of them the next day. What marvel, since one day is with God as a thousand years!"

To our position that the baptism of the Spirit is identical with entire sanctification, it may be objected that there was no need of the purification of Jesus Christ, and yet he, the sinless man, was baptized with the Holy Ghost. Our reply to this is, that entire sanctification is a negative work -- the destruction of sin; the positive work, the constructive part, is much the greater -- it is the subsidizing of all the faculties, filling all the capacities with Divine life and power. A sinless soul may need the positive when it has no need of the negative part of the work wrought by the Holy Spirit. We believe that Jesus was baptized of the Holy Ghost because that baptism, at a certain stage of spiritual development, is the normal method of advancement necessary to the perfect unfolding of the spiritual life of every soul. As many people are greatly puzzled by Christ's baptism by the Holy Spirit, as if it were a strange and abnormal thing, we will endeavor to divest the subject of some of its difficulties.

All orthodox believers admit that two distinct natures are so blended in Jesus Christ as to constitute one personality. The human nature was not changed by its union with the Divine. By Christ's human nature we mean his perfect human soul and body. This nature was subject to the limitations and laws of universal humanity. The body grew in stature, the intellect in strength, and moral and spiritual susceptibilities in capacity and beauty. "He grew in favor with God and man." To this end he made diligent use of all the means of grace, read the law, the psalms, and the prophets, prayed much in secret, fasted on important occasions, and gathered with the worshippers in the synagogues and in the temple. As a man these means of grace were as necessary as to any other Jew who would retain the favor of God. He did not, as the Son of God, need such means for retaining his love to the Father. As equal with the Holy Spirit he did not need any endowment of the Spirit; for the Christian Church, both Papal and Protestant, believe the filioque rejected by the Greek Church, which declares that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. But although the Son of God is the channel through which the Holy Spirit flows down to the world from the Father -- the fons Trinitatis, the fountain of the Trinity -- yet nevertheless Jesus, the Son of man, receives him in the way appointed for all believers an instantaneous effusion, received by faith in the promise of the Father. In this Jesus Christ is our pattern as much as in prayer and praise. The form of the dove, and the voice from heaven, and the coincidence of the Spirit-baptism with water-baptism, were peculiarities of this blessing in the case of our Lord which are not essential to it.

What a revolution would be wrought in the Church -- what a resurrection to spiritual life -- what a girding with power, if preachers insisted on the duty of all believers imitating their Master in the Spirit-baptism as in the water-baptism, in the reality as in the shadow, in the thing signified as in the symbol!

O blessed Jesus, hasten that day -- the day of power in thy Church, as it was when it was the first inquiry of the preacher, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" Then would he who writes these words for thy glory, O adorable Saviour, joyfully drop his pen, and exclaim with good old Simeon, "nunc dimittis," "now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace!"

2. The Anointing.

The anointing abideth and teacheth. 1 John 2:27. The Anointing is a person, because he teacheth. The allusion is to the consecration of kings and priests when they are set apart from common life to sacred offices. But when God sets apart his kings and priests he pours upon them the unction of the Holy Ghost, the baptism of the Spirit, the blessed Comforter, who abides forever. The Paraclete, Monitor, or Comforter, is a gift not promised to penitent sinners, but to those who already love and obey Christ. John 14:15, 16. In the days of the apostles, the promise of the Father, the Comforter, was sought for by believers as a definite blessing, and was ordinarily received very soon after regeneration, (Acts 8:15, 17,) because young

converts were instructed and urged to seek it with all their hearts. St. Paul's first question to the Christian neophyte was, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" And, if they had heard only of water-baptism, they were instructed in the advanced doctrine of the Holy Ghost. Acts 19:2-5. The distinct nature of this blessing is seen in the rite of confirmation, still practiced in the Anglican, Lutheran, Roman, and Greek Churches, derived from the apostolical act of laying on hands for imparting the gift of the Holy Ghost. All these Churches are right in teaching that there is a change subsequent to regeneration, (baptism in their theology,) a sharply defined transition and enlargement of the spiritual life. Their error consists in shutting up the anointing Spirit to the narrow channels of ritualism, making an unbroken chain of successional ordinations necessary to the down flowing of the Sanctifier, as an electric current of Divine power. He is received only by faith on the part of the recipient, whether with or without the imposition of hands. In modern times, if testimonies are to be believed, the Lord pours his anointing Spirit upon the hearts of believers without priestly intervention more frequently than with it, because those who employ the rite are apt to rest in the symbol, and to imagine that they have the thing signified.

The spiritual unction, like its symbol, anointing with oil, is instantaneous. The preparation may have extended through years; the act is momentary. The result in both cases is permanent. The man is set apart from a private to a public life from a subject to a monarch. He is henceforth to be a king as long as he lives, though he may vacate his royalty. The holy consecratory ointment was not a simple oil, but was compounded (Exod. 30:23, 24) of four principal spices: pure myrrh, sweet cinnamon, sweet calamus, and casma, with olive oil. These beautifully typify the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. The presence of sweet spices only prefigures that the anointing imparts no acerbity of disposition, no acid tempers, but only gentle and amiable qualities and benevolent affections. The anointing ointment was holy, and God forbade for all time, on pain of death, any imitation of it. Exodus 30:33. What does this symbolize, but that a hypocritical profession of the spiritual unction, or fullness of the Holy Ghost, is a capital offence? The soul, Spirit-anointed, is set apart from self, and solemnly and perpetually consecrated unto God, with the possibility of plucking the crown from his brow and casting it away for ever. Rev. 3:11. But few sovereigns ever abdicate; and few souls once crowned priests and kings unto God ever divest themselves of the kingly dignity conferred by the fragrant chrism of the Holy Ghost. It is a great honor to be born into a royal family: it is a greater to be anointed king. Hence the anointing, says Wesley, "is immensely greater than the new birth;" greater in the joy unspeakable which fills and floods the soul "anointed with the oil of gladness;" greater in conscious dignity and power, being invited to sit with the glorified God-man on his throne, as he has gone up to share the throne of his Father. The unction of the Holy One is a greater blessing than the bodily presence of the Lord Jesus raised from the dead and daily conversing with us. "It is expedient (better) for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you." Although the miracle-worker, who authenticates the Gospel, should withdraw, you will be the gainers, even in point of assurance, by the indwelling of his Successor in your consciousness, dispelling doubt, and giving intuitive certainty. Reader, with this Divine Indweller, you will have a thousand-fold more joy than the human presence of Jesus, magnetic as he was to those who loved him, ever gave. Your efficiency in Christian work, and boldness for Jesus, will be wonderfully increased. Hast thou, my Christian friend, received the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier, in his abiding fullness? Do you have the constant experience of the crowning blessing invoked in the apostolic benediction -- the communion of the Holy Ghost?

"O ye tender babes in Jesus!

Hear your heavenly Father's will;

Claim your portion, plead his promise,

And he quickly will fulfill.

"Pray, and the refining fire

Will come quickly from above:

Now believe, and claim the blessing;

Nothing less than perfect love."

We have assumed that this anointing is the privilege of every believer, because all such are kings and priests unto God. St. Paul implies that the Corinthians are generally enjoying this blessing. He says, (2 Cor. 1:21.) "He that hath anointed us is God." We understand the plural pronoun to include the writer and the believers addressed. [See Alford.] St. John, writing to the Church universal, in his General Epistle asserts that as a body they had the anointing. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One" -- Christ -- "and ye know all things." It was a grace commonly enjoyed by primitive Christians, but did not exhaust itself upon them. "The residue of the Spirit" is with Him whom giving cannot impoverish nor withholding enrich. Christ received the Holy Ghost without measure, (John 3:34.) not to retain, but to impart. He is the almoner of the Father's bounty, the channel through whom he pours the river of his mercy. The Father is the fountain, the Son is the aqueduct, and the Holy Ghost is the Niagara, outpouring the water of life ceaselessly and abundantly for the refreshing all thirsty, believing souls. This explains the two statements, that the Holy Ghost is the unmeasured gift of the Father, and again that Christ baptizes with the Holy Ghost. Seeing that the Son hath all which the Father hath, the Father is said to send forth the Spirit of his Son into the hearts of his children, (Gal. 4:6,) in the name, through the mediation, at the prayer of the Son. John 14:16. The Father anoints believers by giving them his Spirit as he has anointed the Son.

3. The Abiding Comforter.

Many persons, in reading the New Testament, find no such sharply-defined, instantaneous transition in the Christian life after regeneration as is taught by the modern advocates of Christian perfection. This results from their failure to identify with this blessing the baptism of the Holy Ghost, the fullness of the Spirit, the unction that abideth and teacheth, and the gift of the abiding Comforter. It is the purpose of this chapter to show the identity of perfect love with the Comforter promised by Jesus in his last address to his disciples.

1. The Comforter here promised is not limited to the office of imparting consolation. The Greek term "paraclete" might have been rendered assistant, monitor, teacher, or guide. He illumines, and hence sanctifies, for purification is through a perception of the truth. He sheds abroad a knowledge of Christ's love to the soul. Love is the regenerating principle, the seed of God. When love becomes perfect by the full and constant abiding of the Comforter, all antagonisms are excluded, and the plane is reached which is called the higher Life.

2. Consider that the abiding Comforter is not promised by Jesus in St. John's Gospel (Chapter's 14-16) to penitent sinners, but to believers who already love Christ. He opens his address by asserting, "Ye believe in God," and by assuring them that they are heirs to the "many mansions" in his Father's house. "I go to prepare a place for you." For impenitent sinners a place is already prepared -- the place originally "prepared for the devil and his angels." "I will receive you unto myself," is a promise never made to an unregenerate soul.

3. The distinctive condition of receiving the Comforter is love toward Christ evinced by obedience: "If ye love me, keep my commandments; and I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." Several very important truths are here implied. First, that love to Christ, genuine love, having the fruitage of obedience, is possible, before the Comforter consciously abides in the believer. He unconsciously suggests the truth and prompts to repentance and faith, and leads and guides the repenting sinner.

There can be no initial Divine life without the Spirit. But he does not manifest his presence in the consciousness as in the advanced, or technically called higher, life. This consciousness of the presence of the Holy Spirit as distinguished from his hidden operations below the gaze of consciousness, is distinctly announced as one peculiarity of the gift of the Comforter. "But ye know him, for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you." Up to this point the work of the Spirit may have been observed; but the Worker has been veiled from the view of the soul, so that there was room for doubt whether the operation was natural or supernatural; whether the good thoughts, righteous purposes, and holy aspirations came from self, or from a concealed Divine suggester.

Hence, nearly all orthodox theologians, "including Fletcher and Wesley agree that assurance is not essential to saving faith, and so not necessarily connected with it. They agree -- especially the Assembly of Divines, Baxter, and Fletcher -- that to doubt, or directly question, the presence and exercise of saving faith by the subject, is consistent with its presence and exercise in the same subject," ["Saving Faith" By Rev. I. Chamberlayne, D.D.] so long as he has a sincere desire to obey the Gospel and to receive Christ in all his offices, bringing forth inward and outward fruits meet for repentance, fearing God and working righteousness.

This state may be occasionally alleviated by the witness of the Spirit, intermittently enjoyed through weakness of faith. In this state of twilight, with occasional gleams of sunshine, the majority of the modern Church are dwelling, because they do not apprehend and claim the privilege of the abiding Comforter, -- a sun standing ever on the meridian and pouring the full splendors of assurance upon them. Christ gives substantially the same promise, resting on the same condition of love to him, when he says, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him."

Here is the same promise of the Comforter: "He shall take of mine and show them unto you." "He shall glorify me." "He shall testify of me." All manifestations of Christ are through the Comforter, except the miraculous appearing of Jesus in human form to Saul, near Damascus, to qualify him for the apostleship. It is no manifestation, if the Divine is not brought into direct contact with the human. Moreover, the manifestation of a person to a person must have a point of instantaneous recognition, however gradual may have been their approaches to, and however progressive may be their intimacy after, such recognition.

He had manifested himself to Mary Magdalene as a pardoning Saviour, forgiving her sins, and as almighty conqueror of the infernal powers casting out of her seven devils or demons. But the manifestation of Christ to Mary through the Comforter will exalt him in her esteem infinitely higher than her poor conceptions of him in the flesh, and her communion with him will be a thousand times more precious than when she gazed upon his countenance and hung upon his lips. She will henceforth look for him and find him within her own soul, and not in his pathways and abiding-places in Palestine.

She loved him before, but now her soul is a furnace all aglow with an affection deeper, stronger, and more spiritual than before. Her will has melted into his by the "Spirit of burning." Self has been absorbed by a union with Him who once took away her sins.

It is remarkable that Jesus should have made four distinct promises of the Comforter in one short passage in his farewell address. John 14:15-26. This repetition emphasizes this declaration. Let us examine the third promise: "If any man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." To say nothing about the we implying, as the pronoun does, equality with the Father and the utmost intimacy with him, we call attention to the same condition, namely, love, the same test of love, obedience, the perpetuity of the promised blessing, found in the word abode as in the words "abide" and "dwelleth," in the previous promises.

The blessing itself is more strongly expressed -- "we," the Son and the Father, will come unto him. Says Dr. Whedon, "The Father, Son, and Spirit will in spirit come into union with the believer's spirit. And can any one imagine that the believer will be for ever unconscious of his spiritual guests, and incapable of realizing the actuality of their communion? The believer may enjoy a conscious communion with Christ and God." [For a discussion on the Recognition of the Persons of the Trinity, see foot-note in chapter xiii.]

We apprehend that an objection will be raised here, that Jesus had distinct reference to the one coming of the Comforter on the day of Pentecost to the collective body of believers, and that he had no reference to individuals scattered along through the dispensation of the Spirit during thousands of years, and therefore the promise applies to them only in this sense -- that they will be born in the dispensation of the Spirit. We answer that impenitent sinners are born under this dispensation, and yet the promise is not to them.

Says the commentator just quoted, "In the coming dispensation of the Spirit the manifestations of Christ will be made to the spirits of those who love him, and to those alone." This confines the position taken by us, that the promised Comforter was not designed for the collective lovers of Jesus, and for them alone, as the inauguration of what Fletcher styles "the kingdom of the Holy Ghost," but for individuals in all ages who fulfil the conditions -- love and obedience. [Says Allord on John 7:39: "John does not say that the words were a prophecy of what happened on the day of Pentecost; but of the Spirit which believers were about to receive.

Their first reception of him must not be illogically put in the place of all his indwelling and working, which are here intended."] We come to the same conclusion when we examine the conditions. Love is an affection for a personal object. It belongs to the individual. If it were something to be possessed and exhibited only by the organic Body of believers -- the Church in its corporate capacity -- individuals could not fulfil the conditions. We educe the same truth from the fact of the perpetuity of the Comforter.

"He shall abide with you for ever." The pentecostal recipients of the Comforter are all dead. Did the Comforter withdraw from the Church when the last of the pentecostal assembly went into his grave? Is for ever limited to a single generation? Jesus does not thus trifle with human hopes. Through all the ages, therefore, the Comforter will abide, not in Œcumenical Councils, as the representatives of the Council, but in those hearts which invite his entrance by loving Jesus and obeying his law. We have elsewhere proved that Peter's military hearers were in a justified state, having "the spirit of faith and the purpose of righteousness."

We have endeavored to prove in this chapter that the spiritual development of the disciples of Christ was perfectly normal, and hence an example for us to follow. Up to the Pentecost they loved Jesus, and were

tenderly beloved by their Master; but they had not reached that crisis which should divest them of their prejudices, spiritualize their views of Christ's kingdom, purify their hearts, and gird them with irresistible spiritual energy.

An objection may be made, that the endowment of the Spirit in the case of the disciples was necessary in order to qualify them to write infallible religious truth and narrate facts which had faded almost entirely away in their memories, and that such an endowment is not needed by us. But only a few of them were called to write the Gospels, and the Acts, and the Epistles. There were at least a hundred and fourteen gathered in that upper chamber who were not called to be sacred writers. These, nevertheless, received the Spirit of truth as did those who became theopneustic writers. Those who did not need the Spirit of truth to restore to freshness the faded tablet of the memory, did nevertheless need him to make real to their spiritual perception the truths of the Gospel. Hence to all disciples of every age he is the Spirit of reality, because he gives substance to supersensual truth, and reality to that which, to mere intellectual apprehension, is shadowy and unreal, and destitute of power to control the conduct and beautify the character. If we contemplate the weakness and inefficiency of average Christians, paralyzed by doubt and swayed by "things seen and temporal," we shall not deny the need of the coming of the abiding Comforter to gird with strength, and to put the telescope of a perfect faith to the eye to bring the things "not seen and eternal" near, and to make them more influential than this corrupt world. He embodies the sum total of all spiritual blessings. More willing is the Holy Father to give him to each believer than the mother to give the healing medicine to her dying child, or the father to give food and raiment to his soldier son who falls upon his threshold naked and emaciated, just escaped from Andersonville prison. A singular confirmation of the statement that the Holy Spirit, in the fullness of his grace, comprises the sum total of spiritual good, is found in reading Matthew 7:11, and Luke 11:13; the "good things" of the former are explained in the latter by "the Holy Spirit."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/daniel-steele/metaphorical-representations-of-perfect-love/>

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