

The Enduement of Power

by Dougan Clark

The enduement of power is the result of Christ's baptism with the Holy Ghost, and it is the power to impress men's minds and win their souls to Christ.

Scripture: Zechariah 4:6, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:1, 1 Corinthians 2:4, Ephesians 3:16

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Power"

Description

Dougan Clark preaches about the Enduement of Power resulting from Christ's Baptism with the Holy Ghost, emphasizing its necessity to impress minds and win souls to Christ. This power is distinct from intellectual gifts and eloquence but enhances their effectiveness when combined. Believers, when baptized with the Holy Ghost, receive sufficient power for their service, although it may not always be evident in their consciousness. The Church needs this enduement of power to utilize its resources effectively in spreading the Gospel.

Transcript

This, as well as entire sanctification, is a result of Christ's baptism. When the Holy Ghost fell upon the Church of the hundred-and-twenty, on the day of Pentecost, they received not only the purifying of their hearts by faith, but the enduement of power as well. The Apostles, for more than three years, had been in almost daily companionship with Jesus. He had instructed them in the doctrines of the Gospel. He had opened to them the Scriptures concerning Himself. He had expounded to them His own parables. He had given them "power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases." He had sent them "to preach the Kingdom of God, and to heal the sick." They had been present at His miracles; and after His public crucifixion, they had seen Him alive, thus becoming witnesses of His resurrection, and, afterwards, of His ascension.

And yet, all these advantages--unspeakably important as they were--did not qualify them for the work of evangelizing the world. Something else was needed. The Saviour had given them their commission, and their field: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" but He also told them, just as definitely, to tarry at Jerusalem, till they should be endued with power from on high: and to "wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me." And that "promise" was the baptism with the Holy Ghost. By that, and that only, were they to expect the needed qualification to perform their appointed mission. "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."

At the time when Christianity was introduced into the world, the mythological religion of the ancient Greeks prevailed, with greater or less modifications, throughout the Roman Empire. That religion, was an idolatrous polytheism. It recognized gods many, and lords many. It had become incorporated with the institutions of almost every country. The common people accepted without question, the absurdities and superstitions which this religion inculcated; while they practiced, without scruple, the sensual vices and bacchanalian revels which it sanctioned.

But this was not all. Learning and genius were also consecrated to the heathen divinities, and "exhausted their efforts" in laying "exquisite offerings" upon their shrines. In every principal city, some magnificent triumph of architecture would be exhibited to admiring converts, in the shape of a temple in honour of one of the gods or goddesses. With brush, or chisel--on canvas, or in marble--the most beautiful representations of the human form "or face divine," were produced as likenesses of a Jupiter or a Venus, an Apollo or a Diana, a Cupid or a Mercury.

Poets and musicians obtained a world-wide reputation by perpetuating, in verse or in song, the beautiful stories of legendary lore; wherein the divine and the human, the natural and the supernatural were strangely but skillfully blended. The interests of the ordinary artisan were likewise bound up with the idolatrous religion of the world. Thousands of image-makers in many cities, could say with Demetrius, "By this craft we have our wealth:" and oppose everything calculated to bring discredit upon the religion whereby they earned their daily bread, with the angry and despairing cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

There are some evidences, indeed, that the Lord was preparing our fallen race for its Deliverer; that many were growing weary of the vague and unsatisfactory superstitions of the day; that the world was, as it were, pausing in expectation of some great event, when Deity became incarnate in the Lord Jesus Christ. However this may be, the Apostles were to make no compromise with idolatry. If they had been only "setters forth of strange gods;" if they had had nothing to bring before the world, except "questions of their own superstition, and of one, Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive;" if they had simply preached Jesus, as another god in addition to the many gods whom "Asia and the world worshipped;" if they had simply asked for a niche in the heathen temples, where a statue of Christ should be placed beside those of their Olympic deities or of their heroes and demi-gods, it is very possible that they would have encountered but little opposition.

Paul told the Athenians that he perceived that they were very much disposed to the worship of divine beings, and, to add another to their already long list of divinities, would have been no great matter.

But the Apostles were to proclaim the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He had sent. They were to call upon people "to turn from these vanities, unto the living God, which made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein." They were to boldly assert--even when surrounded by splendid edifices, and works of Grecian art, dedicated to the heathen divinities--that God dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, because He had written His law in their hearts; and that the Godhead must not be regarded as "like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." They were to preach, to Jew and Gentile alike, that there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, except the name of a crucified and risen Jesus; and that God now commands "all men everywhere to repent, because He hath appointed a day wherein He will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom He hath chosen." At the name of Jesus, every knee was to bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth; and every tongue to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the

glory of God the Father.

These doctrines necessarily struck at the root of all false religions, and were a declaration of war--uncompromising and exterminating war--against idolatry. They aimed at nothing less than the overturning of superstitious opinions and practices, which had descended from antiquity, which were established in the popular mind and heart, which were identified with the interests of a large number of the community, and in honour of which had been produced the loftiest creations of genius and art which the world has ever seen.

Now it must be confessed that for a dozen unlearned Galilean fishermen this was no small undertaking. One man of learning indeed was afterwards added to their number, but even he, in addition to his culture and his talent, was filled with the Holy Ghost, that he might be qualified for his special office--that of the Apostle to the Gentiles.

Before going forth to win the world for Christ the Apostles were commanded to wait at Jerusalem till they were endued with power. And immediately on the occurrence of the Pentecostal baptism Peter began to preach to the multitude. His words were simple--consisting principally of, quotations from Scripture and witnessing to Jesus and His resurrection: but he had now received the tongue of fire, and at once his hearers were pricked in their hearts and began to inquire, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The result was that the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Now Peter had been preaching before the crucifixion of Christ, so had all the Apostles, so had the seventy disciples whom Jesus had sent forth into every town and village whither He Himself would come. To what extent these had traveled in the ministry and how much time they had occupied in it, we are not informed. Nor are we prepared to say how many converts had been made in all the region where they had preached. But it is safe to say that more souls were converted under Peter's first sermon after the Holy Ghost had come upon him than by all the disciples together by all their ministry before that time.

On that wonderful day there were 3,000, two days afterwards there were 5,000, and then the number is no longer stated, but we are informed that "multitudes were added to the Lord, both men and women." The Saviour's words had indeed been fulfilled. They had received power by the baptism with the Holy Spirit. They had become witnesses throughout Judea, and Samaria, and Galilee, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth: for it is supposed that the gospel was preached, during the Apostolic age, to every nation known to the Jews.

The promise of the baptism, with its consequent endowment of power, was, according to Peter, to "all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." In other words, it is to all Christians, in all ages. And, although all are not Apostles, and all do not need the special qualifications which the Apostles needed for evangelizing the world; yet, it is just as true of Christians now, as it was of them--and true of all Christians--that they are not qualified for their life-work in the service of Christ, until they receive the endowment of power, by Christ's own baptism.

Every justified believer may, and should, do something for Christ. Some may even do much for Him, through His grace: as the Apostles had power to heal the sick, to cast out devils, and to preach the Gospel, with some success, even before Pentecost. But, none can do all that God would have them do, until they receive power by the incoming and indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

The enduement of power is something totally distinct from intellectual cleverness, from learning, and from eloquence. It is best symbolized by the tongue of fire. It enables its possessor to speak burning words, which make their way to the hearts of his hearers. It is not power to tickle the ear, nor to please the fancy, nor to engender pleasurable feelings in the mind: but it is simple power to impress men's hearts, and win their souls to Christ. It may be added to gifts of learning, as in the case of Paul: or to gifts of eloquence, as in Apollos: but it may also be given to unlearned and ignorant men, like Peter and John. It may be possessed by a babe in Christ, if he has received the Holy Ghost; by the poor and illiterate; by those who can scarcely speak a grammatical sentence; by sons, daughters, old men, young men, servants, hand-maidens.

It is sometimes exerted without any words at all; but oftener it accompanies the word spoken, whether by the cultivated or the uncultivated, and renders it effectual, like an arrow in the heart of the King's enemies. The late President Finney, of Ohio, on one occasion went into a manufactory in the State of New York, simply to inspect the machinery, and see the work that was going on. He was accompanied by one of the proprietors, and, on entering the weaving room, he noticed two of the operatives, in a distant part of the chamber, laughing. He fixed his eye upon them, calmly and solemnly, and gradually approached the place where they were. They soon appeared to be in great trepidation. Their laughter was changed to tears, and, when he came near them, an indescribable influence overpowered them. They ceased working, and went down on their knees, and began praying. Others followed: it spread from one room to another: and finally, the proprietor ordered the works to be stopped, and President Finney preached the gospel to them. Many were converted, and a great revival followed. Truly, "the wind bloweth where it listeth."

I do not at all undervalue the importance of learning and talent, when consecrated to the Lord, and employed in His service. An educated man or woman, when really baptized with the Holy Ghost, and endued with power from on high, can doubtless render much more efficient and important service in the cause of Christ, than one who is uneducated; but, I must insist that Christian scholarship--even of the highest order--is something totally distinct from the power of the Holy Ghost. And I do not hesitate to add that, in many instances, a man of very little knowledge or culture, if endued with the power of the Spirit, will accomplish far more in promoting God's Kingdom on earth, than the most talented and cultivated individual--earnest Christian though he may be--will be able to accomplish, without this enduement.

Whoever receives Christ's baptism, receives with it the enduement of power: but this power may be very different in degree in different cases. It is sufficient for the work to which each individual is called. It does not "make Prophets or Apostles--Isaiahs or Pauls, of all, but simply qualifies each for his allotted service. Nor is it always present to the consciousness, as a great reservoir of power laid up for every emergency. It exists, it is true--though more or less latent--in every Holy Ghost baptized believer, because the Spirit, who gives the power, and is the power, abideth in him: but, often he is conscious of nothing else so much as his own utter weakness. This feeling would indicate the very reverse of great power: but when such an one is called upon to engage in any service for Christ, and enters upon it trusting in the Lord, then he finds the power supplied as he needs it. A man in health would scarcely know, from his consciousness, the amount of strength that lies quiescent and unfelt in his muscles: but, if he finds it needful to lift a hundred-pound weight, the latent force of his muscular system comes into active play, and he easily accomplishes his task. So it is also with the power of the Spirit. It is often present to the consciousness, only when it needs to be exercised.

And surely, such an enduement of power is what the Church of Christ on earth, in our day, and its individual membership, particularly need. The prophet Isaiah, looking forward to Gospel days, exclaims,

"Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion! Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city!--for, henceforth, there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean."

And in what does the strength of Zion consist? Not in numbers, unless her membership be baptized and filled with the Spirit. The so-called Christian Church that stands ahead of all others, in the number of its adherents, is the Roman Catholic; and we should hardly admit that it is, also, the strongest body of Christians, in spiritual strength.

Nor does Zion's strength consist in learning, nor intellectual gifts, highly important and useful as these are, when dedicated to the Lord and employed in His service. "It is not by might, nor by power, (human might or power of any kind,) but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." Possibly, it is to remind us constantly of this fact, that "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise: and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen: yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence." The strength of Zion does not consist in money, nor in splendid houses of worship, nor in legal or ritualistic observances of any kind, nor in beautiful and artistic music, nor in the many useful and clever appliances which are being used for the propagation of the Gospel.

What, then, is the strength which Zion is exhorted to put on? It is nothing else than the power of the Spirit, coming into the hearts of His children, sanctifying and energizing them for the service of Christ.

The Church of Christ on earth has plenty of intellect, plenty of culture, plenty of money, plenty of machinery: but these all need to be permeated and directed, and employed under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Just as in a large manufactory the machinery is inert and powerless until the steam is applied, but when that is done, works most beautifully and efficiently in the production of whatever fabric it is designed for: so the zeal, and talent, and energy, and wealth, and appliances of Christ's Church are comparatively barren of results until they are manipulated by the power and wisdom of the indwelling Spirit.

If God's people would be the power in the earth that they are designed to be, they must march under the banner of holiness. For every believer that is sanctified, it is estimated that from seven to ten sinners are converted. Zion's "strength," and her "beautiful garments," are the same. Do we not find in the fact that the Church of Christ has, to so great an extent, failed to enter into the fulness of the blessing, and to receive the baptism with the Holy Ghost and the enduement of power, a reason for the tardy pace at which the glad tidings has been carried from nation to nation?

"Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word: that He might present it to Himself, a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Such must be the Bride of Christ, spotless, pure, "arrayed in fine linen, which is the righteousness of saints."

And it is the business of the Church, and its membership, now, as of old, just to tarry at Jerusalem, till they are endued with power from on high, and then to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. When Zion shall indeed thus awake, and put on her strength and her beautiful garments: when she shall shake herself from the dust of the earth, then she shall arise and shine; then she shall come up out of the wilderness "leaning upon her Beloved, clear as the sun, fair as the moon, terrible as an army with banners." "Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall

be sevenfold, as the light of seven days."

The banner given her to be displayed because of the truth, shall not be allowed to trail in the dust; but waving it aloft clear and bright, she shall be so attractive that sons and daughters shall come to the brightness of her rising, from the north and the south, the east and the west, flocking "as doves to their windows." Her holiness shall be her power. Her beauty shall be her strength.

Remarks

1. The Enduement of Power results from Christ's Baptism with the Holy Ghost.
2. It is the power to impress men's minds, and win their souls to Christ.
3. It is wholly independent of, and distinct from, gifts of learning and eloquence; but when added to such gifts, it imparts to them wonderful effectiveness.
4. The believer who has been baptized with the Holy Ghost, and abides in Christ, always has power sufficient for any service to which he may be called: because the Spirit within, girds and fills and qualifies him at the needful time. But neither the power nor the presence of the Spirit is always manifest to his consciousness.
5. The individual believer needs the enduement of power to qualify him for his life-work in the service of Christ: and the Church as a whole, needs to have her various means and appliances energized by the Holy Ghost, in order to become really successful in spreading the Redeemer's kingdom.

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