

Holiness Triumphant

by James Blaine Chapman

The sermon emphasizes the power of the Holy Spirit to enable believers to live a holy and victorious life, and to finish their course with joy and triumph.

Scripture: Revelation 3:4

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Sanctification"

Description

James Blaine Chapman preaches on the promise of receiving power through the Holy Ghost to be witnesses of Jesus, emphasizing the immediate sanctification of the heart rather than the restoration of the external world. He highlights the importance of being clean in a defiled world, living victoriously in a world of conflict, and finishing life's course with joy and triumph, all made possible by the inner grace of holiness. Chapman encourages believers to embrace holiness triumphant, which empowers them to overcome challenges, remain pure, and find joy in every season of life.

Transcript

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Jesus had now been with His disciples forty days since His resurrection from the dead. From the twenty-fourth chapter of the Book of Luke we learn that during this period He companied with them and talked to them on many subjects. Here in this first chapter of Acts it says that He spoke to them "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." The indications are that He went again over the many themes on which He had spoken to them during His days in the flesh, and He especially emphasized the prospect of the soon coming of the Holy Spirit upon them.

But there was one subject upon which the Master had not touched, and that was concerning the time when He would set up the Kingdom. There was no question as to the fact of His second coming or of the complementary fact that He would set up the Kingdom over all. But He had not indicated the time. Now He was manifestly about to leave to ascend to heaven, and here was a theme that had not been made clear.

So the disciples asked, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Knowing their thinking on this subject, we may interpret these words as meaning, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time renovate and correct the outside world and make it an agreeable world in which a holy man can live?" Now God proposes to do just that sometime. We are taught by the Scriptures to expect the time when the

knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, and when neighbor shall not say unto neighbor, "Knowest thou the Lord?" for all shall know Him from the least to the greatest. And in that day wicked men and wicked angels will be banished; the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms shall be changed and delivered, so that the lion shall eat straw like an ox, the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, a little child shall play upon the den of biting serpent and stinging insect without harm; the deserts will become fruitful; storms and earthquakes shall be no more, and nothing shall hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain. Such conditions are surely coming. But the question of the disciples was, "When are these things to be? Is this the time when all the world without shall be repaired and mended and renovated and made agreeable?" No intelligent person can fail to be moved by the glorious prospect of a restored earth, and we cannot escape thinking of the thrill with which the disciples awaited their Master's answer.

But Jesus' answer was, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." It is not for you to know the time when the outside world will be made happy, but ye shall have opportunity to have the world inside you made holy right away. The Master turned again to the theme of the immediacy of the coming of the Spirit, and now He gave new emphasis to that point.

It has ever been the dream of men to make the world right socially, politically, and economically, that they themselves may become right morally and spiritually in order to harmonize with the world about them. But this is not God's method. His method is to make us right in spite of the bad world about us, and to keep us clean and right in the midst of surroundings that are unfriendly and disagreeable. Men have asked for smooth paths; the Lord has answered by giving them hinds' feet so they can walk on the steep paths. Men have asked for a lighter burden; the Lord has answered by giving them a yoke lined with love with which they can bear the heavy burdens as though they were light. Men have asked for the removal of thorns; God has answered by giving them more grace. Men have asked for a happy world; God has answered by proffering them holy hearts. Just now the proposition is not power without, but Holy Ghost power within.

The promise of the text is that ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost shall come upon you -- power sufficient to make witnesses of you everywhere you go; to witness among your loved ones in Jerusalem, among your neighbors in Judea, among those who are listed as enemies in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth, without regard to the circumstances. The wide sweep of the witnessing power is a guarantee that this power will make you overcomers everywhere and under all circumstances. Ye shall receive power to meet your every need when the Holy Ghost is come upon you.

The promise is so sweeping that there is no chance for enlargement of its scope, and no danger of pushing our development beyond its scope. We therefore, in thinking of "Holiness Triumphant," shall content ourselves with lifting up a few things which belong in the list of indispensables in holy living, and think of them as included in the promise of power to those who have been sanctified by the baptism with the Holy Ghost.

I. POWER TO BE CLEAN IN A WORLD THAT IS DEFILED

A gentleman once observed a lily growing in a damp place at the entrance to a coal mine. The air was filled with grime and coal dust, but the lily was as white and clean as any that grow on the pond. Upon inquiry, the gentleman found that the petals of this lily were always covered with a secretion to which grime and dust would not attach. When anything of a foreign nature fell upon the outer surface of this lily, it

immediately sloughed off, and the lily held up its head in whiteness and in purity. That is somewhat like it is with a truly sanctified soul living in a sinful world. There are indeed slime and filth all about, but the indwelling Spirit enables one to shed earth's defilements and keep clean in the midst of them.

A man whose work required that he be associated intimately with ungodly men was asked how he managed to keep clean thoughts and a clean mouth in the midst of such company. His reply was, "I just let their deeds and words go by." An old-time Christian, distinguishing between temptation and sin, said, "We may not be able to keep the birds from flying over our heads, but we can keep them from making nests in our hair."

In the Book of Revelation, speaking of one of the churches that had about the least to commend, the Master nevertheless said: "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy" (Revelation 3:4). And one of the whitest companies that appeared in John's vision was a group that "came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14).

II. POWER TO LIVE VICTORIOUSLY IN A WORLD OF CONFLICT

We are repeatedly warned in the Scriptures not to be surprised at the opposition of the devil and of the world. In fact, we are distinctly told that there will be opposition. Truly, "the world is no friend to grace to help us on to God." Good people are in the minority in this world, and unless one lives separately enough to make of him something of a "speckled bird" he does not live right. If one lives a truly militant life for God, he must expect that the enemy will fight back.

I once heard an old man say that, considering God's purpose for us, this is the best kind of world He could put us in. The old man went on to say: "This is by no means a good world, but considering what God plans to do in us, with us, and for us, it is the best kind of world He could use. His plan is to have a people 'purified, made white, and tried,' and this world is well adapted to all these purposes. God does not propose to hurry His people off to heaven just to keep the devil from getting them. Rather, He plans to stand by them in their trials and tests, and let them prove their fidelity to Him under pressure. Then when they prove themselves under pressure, He can take away the pressure and they will be faithful forever amidst agreeable surroundings."

Of course, it is not given us to know all that God has in mind for us. But of this we are sure, holiness, wrought in our hearts by the baptism with the Holy Ghost and maintained by His abiding presence, is power to live victoriously in this world, no matter what comes or goes. The Scriptures have said, "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world"; "Yea, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us"; and, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

To be more than conquerors must mean to conquer without using all our resources. David in conflict with Goliath is an example in point. David went forth to the battle with five smooth stones for his sling. He used but one stone, for the giant came down with the first shot. So David came back with four-fifths of his ammunition unused. He was "more than conqueror," and that is the way we can be; for we can overcome and still have strength and power in reserve.

III. POWER TO FINISH OUR COURSE WITH JOY AND TRIUMPH

Each succeeding generation of God's people live closer to the glad time when Jesus will come in the glory of His second advent, when those who are alive and ready for His coming shall be caught up in translation without seeing death. But until that time comes it is the lot of all men, good and bad, to die, and we must live continually with this thought before us. We know God could have arranged it so that His people would have escaped death. But we also know that that is not His plan. He could have kept Daniel out of the lions' den and the Hebrew children out of the furnace of fire, but He did not elect to do that. He chose rather to be with and preserve the one, and to walk with and deliver the others. He could have kept Paul and Silas out of the jail at Philippi. But, no, He kept them in the jail and gave them blessings that enabled them to sing praises at midnight. He could keep His people that they should not see death. But, no, His plan is to let them go through the valley of the shadow, and to come to them in the valley and comfort them with His rod and staff.

Some people have never known the bitterness of poverty. Some have never suffered from painful or wasting disease. Some have counted their friends as more than their enemies. Some have been blessed with long life. But there is no escape from old age, and no escape from death, if Jesus tarries.

One has said that the only permanent disaster is old age. But old age is a disaster only to those whose good is all in this world, and who must therefore leave their joys behind as time carries them along. For "the hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness" (Proverbs 16:31).

Growing old is neither a crime nor a weakness, nor yet, within itself, a calamity. But some people grow bitter as they grow old, and to them age is a calamity. Some old people live so constantly in the past that they are of little use to their contemporaries. Some develop an attitude of self-pity which makes them a care to the younger about them. Some assume an attitude of superiority which unfits them for further fighting in the ranks. But all these things are but evidences of want of grace, for age of itself does not have these effects.

Some people grow gentler and sweeter with the passing years, and none can see them without realizing that, although their hair is turning to silver, their inner lives are turning to gold. These have suffered the same physical deteriorations as the others; but, instead of simply holding their bodies under, they are definitely lifting their souls out on top.

Toward the end of his "love poem" (I Corinthians 13), Paul talked about "seeing through." Poverty, scarcity of friends, old age, approaching death are no more than mists upon the glass, making it necessary sometimes to will to see through, rather than to let the vision stop with the viewing of the mist.

It has been observed that Jesus never attempted to prove immortality. He always took it for granted and made it, as Dr. Frank Crane called it, "the context of life." And because life is mapped with eternity in the consideration, no life should be bitter, trivial, or insignificant.

Moses stood between the throne of Egypt and the valley of affliction, and he chose the good that would be good last and longest. David saw a rainbow through his tears of grief, and said of his dead child, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." And when that "man after God's own heart" climbed up on a high hill and saw the possibilities of eternity, he cried, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." Paul sat in his prison cell consciously facing the prospect of Nero's chopping block. But he persistently looked out beyond this and gloried in the day when Jesus would present him with the crown of life. Even our blessed Lord found strength for trial in the contemplation of the "joy that was set before him"; and the Psalmist brushed aside all earthly sorrows with the words, "Weeping may endure for the night, but joy

cometh in the morning."

The uplifting power of this inner grace of holiness gives a new interpretation to life, old age, and death. Victor Hugo exclaimed, "The frosts of seventy winters are on my head, but the springtime of eternal youth is in my heart."

Sometimes we look at the gray hair of a ripening saint, and say, "Old man, the frosts of many winters are on your head." But he answers, "That is not frost. I am getting ready to wear the crown of life, and my hair is taking on tint agreeable to the color scheme." We say, "Old man, your back is bent from the carrying of many loads." "That's not it," he replies. "I am about to come into the King's presence, and I am practicing obeisance that I may the more readily bow before Him." "Your eyes are dim." "No," he answers, "my focus is just changing. I am not largely interested any more in the things close at hand; so my eyes are training to see 'the land that is very far off,' and to behold 'the king in his beauty.'" "Your hearing is failing." "No," he replies, "they have just closed the windows on the street side to keep out the confusing noise, that I may the better hear the angels sing." "Well, your house is about to fall down." "This is only my tent," he answers. "It was designed only as a temporary dwelling and it has served its day well. It is now unsteady on its foundation, the window-panes are broken out, the whole place is in dilapidation, and the Owner has notified me that He has no plans to spend anything more on repairs. But it's all right. I have had the warning in time, and I have made definite plans to move out into a house that hath foundations."

Mere philosophy is not enough when the crisis comes. At times like that we need the assurance of the Spirit within. But with that assurance, we are able to run the race with patience and finish our course with joy. John Wesley observed of his sanctified Methodist, "Our people die well." Catherine Booth of the Salvation Army, being asked on her dying couch, "Are the waters deep?" replied, "I don't know whether the waters are deep or not. The waters are rising, but so am

I. I'm not going under; I'm going over." At the crossing of the river, S. A. Keen said, "I have now no regrets, bless the Lamb that was slain! If I could, I would do it all over again."

Holiness triumphant! The blessed grace that delivers the young, preserves the mature, and makes happy the old! That gives power to be clean in a world defiled, power to overcome in a world of conflict, and power to run the race with patience and finish the course with joy! How shall we extol it as it deserves? Perhaps our best way is to sing again Isaiah's song of triumph, as recorded in the thirty-fifth chapter of his prophecies:

"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but

the redeemed shall walk there; and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

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