

The Disciple's Companion

by John Henry Jowett

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, and experiencing the gifts and graces of the Apostolic age.

Scripture: John 7:38, John 14:16, Acts 19:1, Romans 8:26, 1 Corinthians 2:10, 2 Corinthians 3:17, Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 5:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:19

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Empowerment"

Description

John Henry Jowett preaches on the importance of receiving the Holy Ghost after believing, emphasizing the need for a deep, intimate companionship with the Spirit rather than just a mental acknowledgment. He highlights how many in the modern Church may be living in a pre-Pentecostal state, lacking the fullness and power of the Spirit in their daily lives. Jowett urges believers to move from a mere mental understanding of the Holy Ghost to a vibrant, experiential relationship that transforms and empowers them, enabling them to bear the fruits of the Spirit and minister effectively.

Transcript

"Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed? And they said unto him, Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Ghost was given." Acts 19:1-3

"Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" Why did he put the anxious question? Were there some ominous signs of impoverishment which aroused this painful wonder? Did he miss something? He certainly did not suspect the reality and sincerity of their faith. The separation of this little body of twelve men from the mighty drift and popular fashion of Ephesian life was itself an all-sufficient proof that they were moving in the fear of the Lord. And yet to the Apostle's trained and discerning eye there was something lacking! I know not what were the signs which stirred his solicitude. Perhaps it was the large care-lines ploughed so deeply upon their faces. Perhaps it was a certain slow heaviness in their walk, or a certain stale flatness in their intercourse. Perhaps it was a look of defeat in their tired eyes- the expression of exhausted reserves, the lack of exuberance, the want of a swinging and jubilant optimism. Perhaps it was the absence of the bird-note from their religious life. I know not what the signs may have been, but some conspicuous gag yawned before the Apostle's penetrating vision, which prompted him to ask this trembling, searching question, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" And the half-spent wearied souls replied, "Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Ghost was given!" How imperfect their equipment! How inadequate their resources! They were resisting the day's drift with a quite

insufficient endowment. They were endeavoring to counteract and transform the fashion of the world with quite inferior dynamics. I know that mighty dynamics can work along the flimsiest threads, and I know that the heavenly powers can operate through the slenderest faith; but there is an unenlightened, a non-vigilant, a non expectant attitude of mind which negatives the divine ministry, which impedes the inflow of the divine power, and which reduces the soul to comparative weakness and impoverishment. The day of Pentecost had come; the marvelous promises had been fulfilled; the wonder-ministry had begun; but these disciples were still in the pre-Pentecostal days: they were behind the spiritual times! "We did not so much as hear whether the Holy Ghost was given." And if you would discover what it means for men to step from pre-Pentecostal dearth to Pentecostal fullness, you must compare the earlier atmosphere of this incident with the atmosphere of its close, and you will find how these weary, labouring men, heavy-footed, heavy-minded, with slow and stammering lips, are transformed into nimble, buoyant, and resourceful servants of the Lord. "The Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied."

But what is the relevancy of all this to our own time? The precise lineaments of this incident are not repeated today. No such impoverishing ignorance prevails among the modern disciples. We know that the Holy Ghost has been given. We know! Ah, I am using a New Testament word, and I must attach to it the wealth of the New Testament significance. We may "know," in the way of cognition: a bare act of the intelligence; merely mental acquisition. And we may "know," in the way of a living fellowship, by the intimate discernments of communion, by the delights and satisfactions of the soul, by real and practical experience. As a matter of cognition, of merely mental enlightenment, we may live in the spacious days of Pentecost; but in daily usage and common experience we may be living in the leaner and straitened days which preceded it. I am deeply persuaded that, judged experimentally by our daily life and practice, much of the mental attitude and spiritual pose of the modern Church is pre-Pentecostal, and that in this thin and immature relationship is to be found the secret of our common weariness and impotence. This is the relevancy of the ancient incident: Do we share their mental temper, their spiritual standpoint, their angle of vision? Are we a little band of pilgrims, laboriously toiling over desert sands, with now and again the privilege of standing upon some Pisgah height and wistfully gazing upon the promised land afar, or are we in the possession and enjoyment of the goodly land, "a land that flows with milk and honey?" Are we still on the road, or have we arrived? Are our religious thinking and experience up-to-date, or are we behind the spiritual times?

If I go into one of our assemblies of praise I find that we are still "tarrying at Jerusalem," waiting for "the Promise of the Father." We are busy invoking instead of receiving, busy asking rather than using. If I listen to the phraseology of the hymns I discover that the outlook of the soul is frequently pre-Pentecostal:

Father, glorify Thy Son:

Answering His all-powerful prayer,

Send that Intercessor down,

Send that other Comforter!

Descend with all Thy gracious powers;

O come, great Spirit, come!

I think that if the Apostle Paul were to visibly enter our assembly when we are singing these strained and fervid supplications he would wonderingly and anxiously ask: "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" He would wonder that men should plead for a Presence when the Presence Himself is pleading to be received! He would wonder that men should continue the strains of the exile when the native air is about their souls! When I listen to some of our prayers, and mark the pose an inclination of the soul, and note its uncertain longings, its timid askings, its trembling waiting for an event which has happened, its sighing for a gift that is already given, I can scarcely realize that the One with whom we are dealing is "a gracious willing Guest, where He can find one humble heart wherein to rest." The attitude is pre-Pentecostal; it is the language of the wilderness; it is not "one of the songs of Zion!"

But when I look a little more deeply at this mental temper, and investigate more closely the nature of its conception, I find that we are still more profoundly allied with the imperfect mood and inclination of the pre-Pentecostal day. Is it native to the Christian inheritance that we should so commonly conceive of the Spirit as an influence, a force, an energy, an atmosphere, an impersonal breath? I know the limitations of the human mind, and I know the fertile and helpful ministry of simile and symbol. I know how inclined we are to dwell in the realm of effects, and to express those very effects in the shrines of figurative speech. It is beautiful and true to speak of some gracious influence upon the soul by the imagery of a wind, or of fire, or of light, or of dew, or of rain. I say it is a beautiful and a helpful ministry; but if this be the predominant characteristic of our thinking we are pre-Pentecostal men and women, and we are self-deprived of the strength and glory of our larger and richer day. The all-encompassing glory of the Christian day is this-that we are dealing, not with an energy, but with a Person-not with "it," but with "Him!" Now, see our danger. We are living in a time when men are busy reducing all phenomena beneath the categories of definite law and order. No phenomenon is now regarded as a lawless vagrant, the sport of a sad or happy chance, wandering as a chartered libertine through the mighty wastes of space. Everything pays obeisance to law. And so, too, in the realm of the spirit, we are busy eliminating chance and caprice; we are taking the tides of ambition, the gusts of passion, the movements of desire, and the kindlings of love, and we are reducing them to the dominion of sovereign law. We are seeing more and more clearly that things are not erratic and lawless just because they are spiritual and ethereal, and that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" is as constant as the laws that breathe in the material world. Well all this is wise and good and inevitable. Only let us see to it that we do not so far bow to a tendency as to enthrone a law in place of a Companion, and exalt a force in place of a Counselor and Friend. We shall lose unspeakably, and miss the fine fervor and flavor of Apostolic life, if our larger knowledge of law attenuates our fellowship with a Person, and our greater familiarity with forces impair our intimacy with the immediate heart of God. "A something not ourselves that makes for righteousness" may be a notable expression of scientific thought, but it is not the language of religion. "A something not ourselves that makes for righteousness," when translated into religious speech, becomes "a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother," and when translated into the New Testament evangel it becomes "the communion of the Holy Ghost." Our fellowship is not with a "something" but with a "Somebody," not with a force but with a Spirit, not with "it" but with "Him"!

It is just here, I think, that Keswick is contributing a vital emphasis to the thought of the modern Church. I do not identify myself with all the mental methods and instruments of Keswick. I think its Old Testament exegesis is often fanciful. I think its symbolisms are often forced and artificial. I think it has often labored to erect doctrinal structures upon a tabernacle-pin when it could have found a much more satisfactory base. I think it has shown a little timidity in the application of its dynamic in the wider fields of social and national life. But even these are criticisms which are directed more at yesterday than at the life and teaching of

today. The all-predominant teaching of Keswick is the personality of the Holy Ghost, and the wonderful and glorious privilege of the Christian believer to have holy and intimate companionship with Him. They do not deal with an influence, they walk with a Friend! There is nothing new in the teaching; it is only the recovery of an emphasis, with this further uniqueness, that while so many of us are contented with the proclamation of the fellowship they are busy in the enjoyment of it, and about their lives there is a strength, and a serenity, and a flavour, and a fragrance, which mark them off from the harassed, restless, feverish world they are seeking to redeem. I miss this glaring contrast between the Church and the world! The saved are too much like the unsaved; the physician is labouring under the disease of his patient; there is no outstanding and commanding difference; we do not, with sufficient legibility, bear God's name "in our foreheads." What is the reason? Is it that we are not long enough in His company to receive the imprint of the fair and gracious seal? Is it that we are having mental commerce with an "it" instead of ceaseless communion with "Him"? I declare my own conviction that here is the secret of much of our impoverishment. We are living too much as men lived before the Holy Ghost was given. We have not occupied the new and far stretching land of Christian privilege. We have not seized upon our inheritance of august and holy companionship, and, therefore, many of the gifts and graces and perfumes of the Apostolic age are absent from our modern religious life.

You cannot, by fellowship with an energy, produce that exquisite little flower called "heart's-ease," which was so prolific and abounding in the life of the Apostle Paul. The prophet of the Old Testament hints at the coming of the flower in his illumined phrase, "He that believeth shall not make haste"! What a word for our own day! He shall not get excited, become fussy, or be thrown into panic! "He shall not make haste"! There shall be progress without much perspiration! There shall be strenuousness without strain! There shall be running without panting! "They shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." They shall be fed with "hidden manna." In the very midst of turbulence shall heart's-ease grow. "He that believeth shall not make haste."

O blessed life! the heart at rest

When all without tumultuous seems!

I say you cannot grow that flower in cooperation with an influence or a force, but only in the strength and grace of a glorious companionship. It is not the product of an energy: it is born of a communion. It is "peace in the Holy Ghost." Do you see much of this flower called "heart's-ease" about today? When the world gazes upon us, the professed disciples of the Master, does it see just a reflection of itself, its own wear and tear, its own strain and worry, or does it stoop to gaze upon a rare flower, and to wonder and to inquire about the soil in which it was grown? Is there anything about our speech and behaviour to suggest that "wear and tear" are counteracted by a secret renewal, the renewal of the Holy Spirit, "the inward man being renewed day by day"? Speaking for myself, I have to say that even when for a day I enter upon my inheritance, and realize the ineffable nearness of the great Companion-Spirit, the strain not only goes out of my mind and heart, but I feel the very wrinkles and care-lines being smoothed out of my face. If we were children of Pentecost, living up to our spiritual times, heart's-ease would bloom just within our gate, and the weary wayfarer would be stopped by its perfume, and would question us as to the secret and manner of its growth.

You cannot, by fellowship with a force, produce the exquisite grace of Apostolic tenderness. Have you ever studied the strength and softness of Apostolic tenderness? Why, their very rebukes and severities emerge from their tenderness! Mark the tenor and order of this Apostolic counsel: "Full of goodness, filled

with all knowledge, able also to admonish"! Do you see where admonition has to be born? Who is to be the monitor? One "filled with all knowledge"! Back still further! "Full of goodness"! Who would not be helped by admonition which came clothed in this tender bloom? But see again: "Admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs"; and even this singing monitor has first of all to "put on a heart of compassion"! All this tenderness is not the softness of weakness; it is the bloom of strength, and is born of the refining and chastening ministry of a great Companionship. We cannot live in the communion of the Holy Ghost without our unnecessary asperities being smoothed away; the very power of the fellowship subdues them into tenderness. And, my brethren, there must never have been a time when it was more needful to ensure this tenderness than today. In these days of hard controversy we must beware of becoming hard. Men who become hard lost the power to inflict hard blows. The most tremendous antagonist is the man who is inherently tender. The only overwhelming anger is "the wrath of the Lamb." No, my brethren; we cannot fight without it! We cannot preach without it! You may perhaps remember how Andrew Bonar and Rober M'Cheyne were having one of their frequent walks together, talking over the ways of their ministry, when "M'Cheyne asked me," say Bonar, "what my last Sabbath's subject had been. It had been: 'The wicked shall be turned into hell.' On hearing this awful text, he asked: 'Were you able to preach it with tenderness?'" Shall we repeat Rober M'Cheyne's question to one another? When we speak on the destiny of the sinful, or on any one of the awful severities of the Word, are "able to preach it with tenderness," with a melting heart, with secret tears? They say that M'Cheyne's severities were terrific, they were so tender! And I do not wonder at his tenderness, for he lived enfolded in the companionship of the Holy Ghost. He was ever holding converse with Him, and how could he become hard? "Oh," said his domestic servant; "Oh! to hear Mr. M'Cheyne at prayers in the morning"! It was as if he would never give over; he had sae muckle to ask." How could he become hard, abiding in a Companionship which was for ever communicating to him the very gentleness of God? You will not get that exquisite sensitiveness from a force; you will get it only from an intimate Friend. "Thy gentleness hath made me great":

Tender Spirit, dwell with me,

I myself would tender be:

And with words that help and heal,

Would Thy life in mine reveal:

And with actions brotherly,

Speak my Lord's sincerity.

And let me add this further word. There is a certain compulsory impressiveness of character which attaches to profound spirituality, and which is commandingly present in those who walk in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. I know not how to define it. It is a certain convincing aroma, self-witnessing, like the perfume of a flower. It is independent of mental equipment, and it makes no preference between a plenteous and a penurious estate. It works without the aid of speech because it is the effluence of a silent and secret communion.. It begins to minister before you preach; it continues its ministry when the sermon is ended. It is endowed with marvelous powers of compulsion, and it sways the lives of others when mere words would miserably fail. The pitman away yonder in the county of Durham felt the strength of this mystic constraint when he said of his old vicar, "You have only to shake that man's hand to feel that he is full of the Holy Ghost"! And his fellow in toil, an agricultural labourer in a not distant village, was bowing beneath the same persuasion when, speaking of another, he said, "I never saw that man cross the

common, sir, without being the better for it"! What is it, this mysterious influence? It is this: "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believed in Him were to receive, for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." Then it was not the vicar whom the pitman felt, but the vicar's great Companion; it was not the man who crossed the common, but the man's inseparable Guest and Friend. My brethren, Jesus is now glorified! The Holy Ghost has been given! We, too, may cross our common, and by the very crossing make men better: for in the prayerful fostering of a conscious friendship with Him the "rivers of living water" will flow from you and me.

I have been leading you among the rudiments of our religious faith and life. I make no apology. "We must need to learn the things we have known the longest." Why should a man apologize for leading his fellows to the running waters and the bracing air of the open moor? We are infinitely richer than we dream. Ours is the Pentecostal inheritance. Let us assume the Pentecostal attitude of zealous and hungry reception. Above all, let us cultivate a sensitive intimacy with the Holy Spirit. Let us listen to Him, let us talk to Him, let us consult Him in all the changing seasons of the changing days, and let us greedily receive His proffered gifts of enlightenment and grace. He will be our all-sufficiency, and we shall move about in the endowment of Pentecostal power.

A little while ago I had a day-dream, one of those subjective visions which sometimes visit the mind in seasons of wakeful meditation and serious thought. I was in my study in the early morning, before the day's work was begun, and I was somewhat sadly contemplating the comparative weakness of my ministry and the many shortcomings in my personal life. And while I pondered, with closed eyes, I became aware of a Presence before Whom my spirit bowed in trembling awe. He lifted my garments, and I saw that they were badly stained. He went away, and came again, and again He lifted my robes, and began to remove the stains, and I saw that He was using the ministry of blood. And then He touched my lips, and they became pure as the lips of a little child. And then He anointed mine eyes with eye-salve, and I knew He was giving sight to the blind. Then He breathed upon my brow, and my depression passed away like a morning cloud. And I wondered what next my august Companion would do, and with the eyes and ears of my spirit I watched and listened. Then He took a pen, and putting it into my hand He said, "Write, for I will take of the things of Christ and show them unto thee." And I turned to my desk and I wrote in the communion of the Holy Ghost.

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