

Power for Service

by Thomas Cook

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual power, specifically the fullness of the Holy Ghost, for Christian workers to be successful in their ministry.

Scripture: Zechariah 4:6, Luke 24:49, John 14:26, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:4, Acts 4:31, Acts 10:38, Romans 15:13, 1 Corinthians 2:4, Ephesians 5:18

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Power"

Description

Thomas Cook preaches about the indispensable qualification of spiritual power for effective spiritual work, emphasizing the need for absolute reliance on the Holy Ghost rather than human abilities or external aids. He highlights the importance of the Holy Spirit in applying and enforcing the Gospel for the conversion of sinners and the blessing of believers, pointing out that the early Church's victories were won in the power of the Holy Ghost. Cook stresses that the baptism of the Holy Ghost brings out individuality and prepares believers for their unique life's work, making them all bright stars in the service of God.

Transcript

We do not disparage other kinds of power, but for spiritual work spiritual power is the first and indispensable qualification. Christianity invites and consecrates every gift of God, and every grace and art of which man is capable. Nowhere does human ability find such sublime inspiration and such lofty exercise as in the service of God. All natural gifts are good, when lost in the great purpose of the Gospel, but they are perilous if depended upon instead of the Holy Ghost. The more gifts the better, if all are subsidized and sanctified by the Spirit of God; but, apart from absolute reliance upon Him, gifts may become a peril and a snare. Said the late Mrs. Booth: "The history of the Church proves that just in degree as she has come to have the human she has ceased to have faith in the supernatural." Paul writes: "Our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost." And again he says: "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and in power." If numbers and prestige decline, it is vain to resort to external aids and appliances. The work is spiritual, and only spiritual power can accomplish it.

Nobody ever was or ever will be converted merely by the preaching of the Gospel. It is the Gospel applied and enforced by the Holy Spirit that saves men. Like the Arctic sun, it is possible to give light without heat. Clear views of truth may be set forth, but without the Spirit's unction no convincing power will attend their enunciation. Sinners will not be converted, nor will believers be quickened and blessed.

It is lamentable to see how frequently Christian workers take that one and essential condition of success, the presence and power of the Holy Ghost, for granted, while they spare no pains to secure all other elements of necessary preparation. No worker can be inspired to the maximum of possible service without the fullness of the Holy Ghost. The weakest, with this anointing, is stronger than the strongest without it. Not that the same results will follow in the case of all believers who receive the fullness of the Spirit. The same spark would issue variously according to where it fell. If it fell upon tinder it would blaze, if upon marble it would go out, if upon wet wood it would leave a scar, if upon water it would raise a hiss, if upon powder it would explode. And the same Spirit produces different results according to the temperament, mental constitution and spiritual capacity of those upon whom He descends. Peter becomes all Peter in the bold prominence of his peculiar characteristics, but he is not duplicated in any other apostle. John is himself and so is Paul, and so shall all be who are filled with the Holy Ghost. It takes this baptism to bring out a man's individuality. The Church is too much like the "Milky Way" in the heavens. Astronomers tell us that it consists of a conglomeration of small stars so insignificant in size as to lose their individuality. The baptism of the Holy Ghost will make a bright and particular star of each person who receives it. Our work and mission will differ from that of others in its special features; but filled with the Spirit we shall each be prepared for our own life's work, whatever that work may be. No man can be all that he might be without this priceless gift.

It was this Pentecostal baptism that prepared apostles for their work. What else could have prepared instruments apparently so inadequate for their stupendous task? One more difficulty was never undertaken by mortals. They are entrusted with a work which is to turn the world upside down. Is it conceivable that a few rude unlettered fishermen can overthrow all the great Religions of the world? Will the hatred and prejudice of the Jew, the supercilious contempt of the Roman and the pride and profligacy of the Greek give way at the bidding of peasants of Galilee? Within one generation Paganism was shaken to the center, and Christianity had spread throughout the known world. Had the Church continued to grow at the same rate at which it increased during the first century, in all probability three or four centuries would have completed the salvation of the world. To men filled with the Spirit difficulties melted into empty air. There was no limit to their hopes, because there was no limit to their power. "The weakest became as David, and the strong as the Angel of the Lord." Their strength was not "as the strength of ten," but as the strength of the Almighty. Nothing could resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which they spoke. Multitudes were pricked to the heart, and cried, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

The mighty victories of the early Church were won in the power of the Holy Ghost, and this, and this only, is the essential of Christianity as an all-conquering power in the world. Everything without this avails nothing, but with this our weakness is linked to Omnipotence, and all things are possible. We know of nothing else that is needed. Our machinery is well-nigh perfect. We have wealth, social status, educational advantages, printing-presses, Bible and Tract Societies, and Christian legislation on our side. The whole world is open to us. Nothing is wanted for the grand consummation of our work in the world but the baptism of fire. Pentecostal power will bring Pentecostal results.

Is there not an experience for us, similar in kind and degree to that experienced by the apostles? We say similar in kind, because the real secret of the mighty change in the character and conduct of the apostles was not in the power of speaking with tongues, nor in the power to work miracles, but in the possession of the Holy Spirit Himself. Power dwells in a person, and that person is God the Holy Ghost. He does not hire out His attributes, as some vainly imagine; He comes to our hearts Himself. To receive Him in His fullness is to receive power. His gifts vary with the ages, sometimes bestowed, and sometimes withheld. His

administrations differ according to the needs of the Church and the times, but He Himself remains the same. "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever." The same power must, therefore, be possible to us which was received by the apostles on and after the day of Pentecost. We are still in the dispensation of the Spirit. The might of God was not exhausted at Pentecost. That was simply a specimen day; an earnest and pledge of a still fuller manifestation of God to men. The promise still stands, "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh."

Have we not all known men who possessed this wonderful gift? They seemed to be able to look into the very souls of their hearers, and to talk to them with an almost Divine authority and instantaneous effect. Some of them were not profound thinkers or powerful speakers, but they were wholly devoted to God, and full of desire for the salvation of souls. When they spoke they seemed surcharged with an energy which could not be called their own. They had something which touched their tongue, and enabled them to declare with astonishing effectiveness and attractiveness the message of grace. It was like the holy oil poured on Aaron's head, and which, running down to the skirts of his garments, communicated to the whole man a grateful fragrance. We have felt at a loss to account for their influence, and have been compelled to confess that the power they possessed was not human but Divine. They had received that Divine endowment which is called unction, the crowning gift of the Holy Spirit for service. It is neither pathos, nor eloquence, nor psychological power, nor mental force, but a subtle, mysterious, unaccountable, and almost irresistible influence which only God can give. No words can describe the gift, but it may be known and felt by all.

The experience of the late D. L. Moody, of America, is very striking. We give it in his own words: "When I was preaching in Farewell Hall in Chicago, I never worked harder to prepare my sermons than I did then. I preached and preached; but it was beating against the air. A good woman used to say: 'Mr. Moody, you don't seem to have power in your preaching.' Oh, my desire was that I might have a fresh anointing! I requested this woman and a few others to come and pray with me every Friday at four o'clock. Oh, how piteously I prayed that God might fill the empty vessel! After the fire in Chicago, I was in New York City, and going into the Bank in Wall Street, it seemed as if I felt a strange and mighty power coming over me. I went up to the hotel, and there in my room I wept before God, and cried, 'O, my God, stay Thy hand.' He gave me such fullness that it seemed more than I could contain. May God forgive me if I should seem to speak in a boastful way; but I do not know that I have preached a sermon since but God has given me some soul. I would not be back where I was four years ago for all the wealth of the world. I seem a wonder to some of you; but I am a greater wonder to myself than to any one else. These are the very same sermons I preached at Chicago, word for word. They are not new sermons; but the power of God. It is not a new Gospel; but the old Gospel with the Holy Ghost of power."

Such is Mr. Moody's account of the anointing which made him what he was. Nothing else can make a man so powerful and glorious in his life and history. The wonder is that any Christian worker can be content to work without it. Much better would it be for the world if the Church would cease making weak efforts for its salvation, and wait upon God, until it is endued with this power from on high. With it we shall accomplish more in one year than in a hundred years of working in our own strength. If we spent half as much time in positive prayer for this anointing as is spent in thinking about it, there would not be workers enough to help those who would be seeking their way to Jesus. Prayer and faith are the indispensable conditions. "There in the heavens is the residue of the Spirit; prayer taps the reservoir, and the outlet widens as we pray." The disciples continued with one accord in prayer and supplication. Socrates said that his work in Athens was to bring men "from ignorance unconscious to ignorance conscious." Our first need is the

consciousness of need. When this is realized we shall put our desires into one heartfelt petition for the fullness of the Holy Ghost, and not cease to present it until we have prevailed. "Tarry ye ... until ye be endued with power from on high."

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