

The Holy Spirit

by Watchman Nee

The Holy Spirit is given to us on the basis of the exaltation of Christ, and we can receive Him by faith, trusting in what the Lord has already done.

Scripture: Acts 2:38, Romans 5:5, Romans 8:9, Ephesians 1:3

Topics: "Surrender to God", "The Holy Spirit"

Description

Watchman Nee emphasizes the vital role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer, explaining that the Spirit's outpouring and indwelling are essential for effective Christian living and service. He highlights that the Holy Spirit is given not based on our merits but through the exaltation of Jesus Christ, and that faith in this truth is crucial for experiencing the Spirit's power. Nee encourages believers to recognize their identity as temples of the Holy Spirit, which calls for a full surrender to God's will. He stresses that true spiritual blessings come from understanding and accepting the divine facts of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives. Ultimately, he calls for a revelation of the Spirit's indwelling to transform our lives and empower us for service.

Transcript

We have spoken of the eternal purpose of God as the motive and explanation of all His dealings with us. Now, before we return to our study of the phases of Christian experience as set forth in Romans, we must digress yet again in order to consider something which lies at the heart of all our experience as the vitalizing power of effective life and service. I refer to the personal presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit of God.

And here, too, let us take as our starting-point two verses from Romans, one from each of our sections. The love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost which was given unto us (Romans 5.5). "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8. 9).

God does not give His gifts at random, nor dispense them in any arbitrary fashion. They are given freely to all, but they are given on a definite basis. God has truly "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1. 3), but if those blessings which are ours in Christ are to become ours in experience, we must know on what ground we can appropriate them.

In considering the gift of the Holy Spirit it is helpful to think of this in two aspects, as the Spirit outpoured and the Spirit indwelling, and our purpose now is to understand on what basis this twofold gift of the Holy

Spirit becomes ours. I have no doubt that we are right in distinguishing thus between the outward and the inward manifestations of His working, and that as we go on we shall find the distinction helpful. Moreover, when we compare them, we cannot but come to the conclusion that the inward activity of the Holy Spirit is the more precious. But to say this is not for one moment to imply that His outward activity is not also precious, for God only gives good gifts to His children. Unfortunately we are apt to esteem our privileges lightly because of their sheer abundance.

The Old Testament saints, who were not as favoured as we are, could appreciate more readily than we do the preciousness of this gift of the outpoured Spirit. In their day it was a gift given only to the select few—chiefly to priests, judges, kings and prophets—whereas now it is the portion of every child of God. Think! we who are mere nonentities can have the same Spirit resting upon us as rested upon Moses the friend of God, upon David the beloved king, and upon Elijah the mighty prophet. By receiving the gift of the outpoured Holy Spirit we join the ranks of God's chosen servants of the Old Testament dispensation. Once we see the value of this gift of God, and realise too our deep need of it, we shall immediately ask, How can I receive the Holy Spirit in this way to equip me with spiritual gifts and to empower me for service? Upon what basis has the Spirit been given?

THE SPIRIT OUTPOURED

Let us turn first to Acts chapter 2 verses 32 to 36 *. Let us for the moment set verses 34 and 35 aside and consider verses 33 and 36 together. The former are a quotation from the 110th Psalm and are really a parenthesis, so we shall get the force of Peter's argument better if we ignore them for the time being. In verse 33 Peter states that the Lord Jesus was exalted " at the right hand of God " (mg.). What was the result? He " received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost ". And what followed? Pentecost! The result of His exaltation was—" this, which ye see and hear ".

* (32) This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses. (33) Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear. (34) For David ascended not into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, (35) Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet. (36) Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified."

What, then, was the basis upon which the Spirit was first given to the Lord Jesus to be poured out upon His people? It was His exaltation to Heaven. This passage makes it absolutely clear that the Holy Spirit was poured out because the Lord Jesus was exalted. The outpouring of the Spirit has no relation to your merits or mine, but only to the merits of the Lord Jesus. The question of what we are does not come into consideration at all here, On what basis did you receive forgiveness of sins? Was it because you prayed so earnestly, or because you read your Bible from cover to cover, or because of your regular attendance at Church? Was it because of your merits at all? No! A thousand times, No! On what ground then were your sins forgiven? " Apart from shedding of blood there is no remission " (Hebrews 9. 22). The sole ground of forgiveness is the shedding of blood; and since the precious Blood has been shed, your sins have been forgiven.

Now the principle on which we receive the endowment of the Holy Spirit is the very same as that on which we receive forgiveness of sins. The Lord has been crucified, therefore our sins have been forgiven ; the Lord has been glorified, therefore the Spirit has been poured out upon us. Is it possible that the Son of

God shed His Blood and that your sins, dear child of God, have not been forgiven? Never! Then is it possible that the Son of God has been glorified and you have not received the Spirit? Never!

Some of you may say: I agree with all this, but I have no experience of it. Am I to sit down smugly and say I have everything, when I know perfectly well I have nothing? No, we must never rest content with objective facts alone. We need subjective experience also; but that experience will only come as we rest upon Divine facts. God's facts are the basis of our experience.

Let us go back again to the question of justification. How were you justified? Not by doing anything at all, but by accepting the fact that the Lord had done every thing. Enduement with the Holy Spirit becomes yours in exactly the same way as justification, not by your doing anything yourself, but by your putting your faith in what the Lord has already done.

If we lack the experience, we must ask God for a revelation of the eternal fact of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as the gift of the exalted Lord to His Church. Once we see that, effort will cease, and prayer will give place to praise. It was a revelation of what the Lord had done for the world that brought to an end our efforts to secure forgiveness of sins, and it is a revelation of what the Lord has done for His Church that will bring to an end our efforts to secure the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We work because we have not seen the work of Christ. But when once we have seen that, faith will spring up in our hearts, and as we believe, experience will follow.

Some time ago a young man, who had only been a Christian for five weeks and who had formerly been violently opposed to the Gospel, attended a series of meetings which I was addressing in Shanghai. At the close of one in which I was speaking along the above lines, he went home and began to pray earnestly, 'Lord, I do want the power of the Holy Spirit. Seeing Thou hast now been glorified, wilt Thou not now pour out Thy Spirit upon me?' Then he corrected himself: 'Oh no, Lord, that's all wrong!' and began to pray again: 'Lord Jesus, we are in a lifepartnership, Thou and I, and the Father has promised us two things—glory for Thee, and the Spirit for me. Thou, Lord, hast received the glory ; therefore it is unthinkable that I have not received the Spirit. Lord, I praise Thee! Thou hast already received the glory, and I have already received the Spirit.' From that day the power of the Spirit was consciously upon him.

FAITH IS AGAIN THE KEY

As for forgiveness, so equally for the coming upon us of the Holy Spirit, the whole question is one of faith. As soon as we see the Lord Jesus on the Cross, we know our sins are forgiven ; and as soon as we see the Lord Jesus on the Throne, we know the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon us. The basis upon which we receive the enduement of the Holy Spirit is not our praying and fasting and waiting, but the exaltation of Christ. Those who emphasize tarrying and hold 'tarrying meetings' only mislead us, for the gift is not for the 'favoured few' but for all, because it is not given on the ground of what we are at all, but of what Christ is. The Spirit has been poured out to prove His goodness and greatness, not ours. Christ has been crucified, therefore we have been forgiven: Christ has been glorified, therefore we have been endued with power from on high. It is all because of Him.

Suppose an unbeliever expresses the desire to be saved, and you explain to him the way of salvation and pray with him. Suppose then he prays after this fashion: 'Lord Jesus, I believe Thou hast died for me, and that Thou canst blot out all my sins. I truly believe Thou wilt forgive me.' Have you any confidence that that man is saved? When will you rest assured that he has really been born again? Not when he prays: 'Lord, I believe Thou wilt forgive my sins', but when he says: 'Lord, I praise Thee that Thou hast forgiven

my sins. Thou hast died for me; therefore my sins are blotted out'. You believe a person is saved when prayer turns to praise-when he ceases to ask the Lord to forgive him, but praises Him that He has already done so because the Blood of the Lamb has already been shed.

In the same way, you can pray and wait for years and never experience the Spirit's power; but when you cease to plead with the Lord to pour out His Spirit upon you, and when instead you trustfully praise Him that the Spirit has been poured out because the Lord Jesus has been glorified, you will find that your problem is solved. Praise God! no single child of His need agonize, nor even wait, for the Spirit to be given. Jesus is not going to be made Lord; He is Lord. Therefore I am not going to receive the Spirit ; I have received the Spirit. It is all a question of the faith which comes by revelation. When our eyes are opened to see that the Spirit has already been poured out because Jesus has already been glorified, then prayer turns to praise in our hearts.

All spiritual blessings are given on a definite basis. God's gifts are freely given, but there are conditions which must be fulfilled on our part before the reception of them is possible. There is a passage in God's Word which makes the conditions of the outpoured Spirit perfectly clear: " Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins ; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him " (Acts 2. 38, 39).

Four things are mentioned in this Passage: Repentance, Baptism, Forgiveness, and the Holy Spirit. The first two are conditions, the second two are gifts. What are the conditions to be fulfilled if we are to have forgiveness of sins? According to the Word they are two: repentance and baptism.

The first condition is repentance, which means a change of mind. Formerly I thought sin a pleasant thing, but now I have changed my mind about it; formerly I thought the world an attractive place, but now I know better; formerly I regarded it a miserable business to be a Christian, but now I think differently. Once I thought certain things delightful, now I think them vile ; once I thought other things utterly worthless, now I think them most precious. That is a change of mind, and that is repentance. No life can be truly changed apart from such a change of mind.

The second condition is baptism. Baptism is an outward expression of an inward faith. When in my heart I truly believe that I have died with Christ, have been buried and have risen with Him, then I ask for baptism. I thereby declare publicly what I believe privately. Baptism is faith in action.

Here then are two divinely appointed conditions of forgiveness-repentance, and faith publicly expressed. Have you repented? Have you testified publicly to your union with your Lord? Then have you received remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost? You say you have only received the first gift, not the second. But, my friend, God offered you two things if you fulfilled two conditions! Why have you only taken one? What are you doing about the second?

Suppose I went into a book-shop, selected a two-volume book, priced at ten shillings, and, having put down a ten-shilling note, walked out of the shop, carelessly leaving one volume on the counter. When I reached home and discovered the oversight, what do you think I should do? I should go straight back to the shop to get the forgotten book, but I should not dream of paying anything for it. I should simply explain to the shopkeeper that both volumes were duly paid for, and ask him if he would therefore kindly let me have the second one; and without any further payment I should march happily out of the shop with my possession under my arm. Would you not do the same under the same circumstances?

But you are under the same circumstances. If you have fulfilled the conditions you are entitled to two gifts, not just one. You have already taken the one ; why not just come and take the other now? Say to the Lord, 'Lord, I have complied with the conditions for receiving remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost, but I have foolishly only taken the former. Now I have come back to take the gift of the Holy Ghost, and I praise Thee for it.'

THE DIVERSITY OF THE EXPERIENCE

But you ask: 'How shall I know that the Holy Spirit is come upon me?' I cannot tell how you will know, but you will know. No description has been given us of the personal sensations and emotions of the disciples at Pentecost. We do not know exactly how they felt, but we do know that their feelings and behaviour were somewhat abnormal, because people seeing them said they were intoxicated. When the Holy Spirit falls upon God's people there will be some things which the world cannot account for. There will be supernatural accompaniments of some kind, though it be no more than an overwhelming sense of the Divine Presence. We cannot and we must not stipulate what particular form such outward expressions will take in any given case, but one thing is sure, that each one upon whom the Spirit of God falls will know it.

When the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost there was something quite extraordinary about their behaviour, and Peter offered an explanation from God's Word to all who witnessed it. This, in substance, is what he said: 'When the Holy Spirit falls upon believers, some will prophesy, some will dream dreams, and others will see visions. This is what God has stated through the prophet Joel.' But did Peter prophesy? Well, hardly in the sense in which Joel meant it. Did the hundred and twenty prophesy or see visions? We are not told that they did. Did they dream dreams? How could they, for were they not all wide awake? Well then, what did Peter mean by using a quotation that seems scarcely to fit the case at all? In the passage quoted (Joel 2. 28, 29), prophecy, dreams and visions are said to accompany the outpouring of the Spirit, yet these evidences were apparently lacking at Pentecost.

On the other hand, Joel's prophecy said not a word about " a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind ", nor about " tongues parting asunder like as of fire " as accompaniments of the Spirit's outpouring; yet these were manifest in that upper room. And where in Joel do we find mention of speaking in other tongues? And yet the disciples at Pentecost did so.

What did Peter mean? Imagine him quoting God's Word to show that the experience of Pentecost was the outpouring of the Spirit spoken of by Joel, without a single one of the evidences mentioned by Joel being found at Pentecost. What the Book mentioned the disciples lacked, and what the disciples had the Book did not mention! It looks as though Peter's quotation of the Book disproves his point rather than proving it. What is the explanation of this mystery?

Let us recall that Peter was himself speaking under the control of the Holy Spirit. The Book of the Acts was written by the Spirit's inspiration, and not one word was spoken at random. There is no misfit, but a perfect harmony. Note carefully that Peter did not say: 'What you see and hear fulfils what was spoken by the prophet Joel'. What he said was: " This is that which hath been spoken by the prophet Joel " (Acts 2. 16). It was not a case of fulfilment, but of an experience of the same order. " This is that " means that ' this which you see and hear is of the same order as that which is foretold'. When it is a case of fulfilment, each experience is reduplicated and prophecy is prophecy, dreams are dreams, and visions are visions ; but when Peter says " This is that ", it is not a question of the one being a replica of the other, but of the one belonging to the same category as the other. "This" amounts to the same thing as " that " ; " this " is the

equivalent of " that " ; " this is that ". What is being emphasized by the Holy Spirit through Peter is the diversity of the experience. The outward evidences may be many and varied, and we have to admit that occasionally they are strange ; but the Spirit is one, and He is Lord. (See I Corinthians 12.4-6.)

What happened to R. A. Torrey when the Holy Spirit came upon him after he had been a minister for years? Let him tell it in his own words:

'I recall the exact spot where I was kneeling in prayer in my study.... It was a very quiet moment, one of the most quiet moments I ever knew.... Then God simply said to me, not in any audible voice, but in my heart, "It's yours. Now go and preach." He had already said it to me in His Word in 1 John 5. 14, 15; but I did not then know my Bible as I know it now, and God had pity on my ignorance and said it directly to my soul. . . . I went and preached, and I have been a new minister from that day to this.... Some time after this experience (I do not recall just how long after), while sitting in my room one day ... suddenly . . . I found myself shouting (I was not brought up to shout and I am not of a shouting temperament, but I shouted like the loudest shouting Methodist), "Glory to God, glory to God, glory to God", and I could not stop. . . . But that was not when I was baptized with the Holy Spirit. I was baptized with the Holy Spirit when I took Him by simple faith in The Word of God.` *

The outward manifestations in Torrey's case were not the same as those described by Joel or by Peter, but " this is that ". It is not a facsimile, yet it is the same thing.

* The Holy Spirit, who He is and what He does, by R. A. Torrey, D.D., pp. 198-9.

And how did D. L. Moody feel and act when the Spirit came upon him?

'I was crying all the time that God would fill me with His Spirit. Well, one day, in the city of New York-oh, what a day! -I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it; it is almost too sacred an experience to name. Paul had an experience of which he never spoke for fourteen years. I can only say that God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand. I went preaching again. The sermons were not different; I did not present any new truths; and yet hundreds were converted. I would not now be placed back where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world it would be as the small dust of the balance."

The outward manifestations that accompanied Moody's experience did not tally exactly with Joel's description, or Peter's, or Torrey's, but who could doubt that " this " which Moody experienced was " that " experienced by the disciples at Pentecost? It was not the same in manifestation, but it was the very same in essence. **

** The Life of Dwight L. Moody, by his son, W. R. Moody, p. 149.

And what was the experience of the great Charles Finney when the power of the Holy Ghost came upon him?

I received a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost without any expectation of it, without ever having the thought in my mind that there was any such thing for me, without any recollection that I had ever heard the thing mentioned by any person in the world, the Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me body and soul. No words can express the wonderful love that was shed abroad in my heart. I wept aloud with joy and love."

Finney's experience was not a duplicate of Pentecost, nor of Torrey's experience, nor of Moody's; but " this certainly was " that ". Autobiography of Charles E. Finney, chapter 2.

When the Holy Spirit is poured out upon God's people their experiences will differ widely. Some will receive new vision, others will know a new liberty in soul-winning, others will proclaim the Word of God with power, and yet others will be filled with heavenly joy or overflowing praise. " This ... and this ... and this ... is that! " Let us praise the Lord for every new experience that relates to the exaltation of Christ and of which it can truly be said that " this " is an evidence of " that ". There is nothing stereotyped about God's dealings with His children. Therefore we must not by our prejudices and preconceptions make a water-tight compartment for the working of His Spirit, either in our own lives or in the lives of others. This applies equally to those who require some particular manifestation (such as 'speaking with tongues') as evidence that the Spirit has come upon them and to those who deny that any manifestation is given at all. We must leave God free to work as He wills, and to give what evidence He pleases of the work He does. He is Lord, and it is not for us to legislate for Him.

Let us rejoice that Jesus is on the throne, and let us praise Him that, since He has been glorified, the Spirit has been poured out upon us all. As we accept the Divine fact in all the simplicity of faith, we shall know it with such assurance in our own experience that we shall dare to proclaim with confidence-" This is that!"

THE SPIRIT INDWELLING

We move on now to the second aspect of the gift of the Holy Spirit, which, as we shall see in our next chapter, is more particularly the subject of Romans 8. It is that which we have spoken of as the Spirit indwelling. " If so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you . . ." (Romans 8. 9). " If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you. . ." (Rom. 8. 11).

As with the Spirit outpoured, so with the Spirit indwelling, if we are to know in experience that which is ours in fact, our first need is of Divine revelation. When we see Christ as Lord objectively-that is, as exalted to the throne in Heaven-then we shall experience the power of the Spirit upon us. When we see Christ as Lord subjectively-that is, as effective Ruler within our lives-then we shall know the power of the Spirit within us.

A revelation of the indwelling Spirit was the remedy Paul offered the Corinthian Christians for their unspirituality. It is important to note that the Christians in Corinth had become preoccupied with the visible signs of the Holy Spirit's outpouring and were making much of 'tongues' and miracles, while at the same time their lives were full of contradictions and were a reproach to the Lord's Name. They had quite evidently received the Holy Spirit and yet they remained spiritually immature; and the remedy God offered them for this is more-I say it with the utmost reverence: You who have been born again of the Spirit of God-you carry God in your heart!

All the flippancy of the children of God would cease too if they realised the greatness of the treasure deposited within them. If you have only ten shillings in your pocket you can march gaily along the street, talking lightly as you go, and swinging your stick in the air. It matters little if you lose your money, for there is not much at stake. But if you carry a thousand pounds in your pocket, the position is vastly different, and your whole demeanour will be different too. There will be great gladness in your heart, but no careless jaunting along the road; and once in a while you will slacken your pace and, slipping your hand into your pocket, you will quietly finger your treasure again, and then with joyful solemnity continue on your way.

In Old Testament times there were hundreds of tents in the camp of Israel, but there was one tent quite different from all the rest. In the common tents you could do just as you pleased-eat or fast, work or rest, be joyful or sober, noisy or silent. But that other tent was a tent that commanded reverence and awe. You might move in and out of the common tents talking noisily and laughing gaily, but as soon as you neared that special tent you instinctively walked more quietly, and when you stood right before it you bowed your head in solemn silence. No one could touch it with impunity. If man or beast dared to do so, death was the sure penalty. What was so very special about it? It was the temple of the living God. There was little unusual about the tent itself, for it was outwardly of very ordinary material, but the great God had chosen to make it His abode.

Do you realise what happened at your conversion? God came into your heart and made it His temple. In Old Testament days God dwelt in a temple made of stone; today He dwells in a temple composed of living believers. When we really see that God has made our hearts His dwelling-place, what a deep reverence will come over our lives! All lightness, all frivolity will end, and all self-pleasing too, when we know that we are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells within us. Has it really come home to you that wherever you go you carry with you the Holy Spirit of God? You do not just carry your Bible with you, or even much good teaching about God, but God Himself.

The reason why many Christians do not experience the power of the Spirit, though He actually dwells in their hearts, is that they lack reverence. And they lack reverence because they have not had their eyes opened to the fact of His presence. The fact is there, but they have not seen it. Why is it that some Christians are living victorious lives while others live in a state of constant defeat? The difference is not accounted for by the presence or absence of the Spirit (for He dwells in the heart of every child of God) but by this, that some recognize His indwelling and others do not. True revelation of the fact of the Spirit's indwelling will revolutionise the life of any Christian.

THE ABSOLUTE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body " (1 Cor. 6. 19, 20).

This verse now takes us a stage further, for, when once we have made the discovery of the fact that we are the dwelling-place of God, then a full surrender of ourselves to God must follow. When we see that we are the temple of God we shall immediately recognize that we are not our own. Consecration will follow revelation. The difference between victorious Christians and defeated ones is not that some have the Spirit while others have not, but that some know His indwelling and others do not, and that consequently some recognize the Divine ownership of their lives while others are still their own masters.

Revelation is the first step to holiness, and consecration is the second. A day must come in our lives, as definite as the day of our conversion, when we give up all right to ourselves and submit to the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ. There may be a practical issue raised by God to test the reality of our consecration, but whether that be so or not, there must be a day when, without reservation, we surrender everything to Him -ourselves, our families, our possessions, our business and our time. All we are and have becomes His, to be held henceforth entirely at His disposal. From that day we are no longer our own masters, but only stewards. Not until the Lordship of Jesus Christ is a settled thing in our hearts can the Spirit really operate effectively in us. He cannot direct our lives effectually until all control of them is committed to Him. If we do not give Him absolute authority in our lives, He can be present, but He cannot

be powerful. The power of the Spirit is stayed.

Are you living for the Lord or for yourself? Perhaps that is too general a question, so let me be more specific. Is there anything God is asking of you that you are withholding from Him? Is there any point of contention between you and Him? Not till every controversy is settled and the Holy Spirit is given full sway can He reproduce the life of Christ in the heart of any believer.

An American friend, now with the Lord, whose name we will call Paul, cherished the hope from his early youth that one day he would be called 'Dr. Paul'. When he was quite a little chap he began to dream of the day when he would enter the university, and he imagined himself first studying for his M.A. degree and then for his Ph.D. Then at length the glad day would arrive when all would greet him as 'Dr. Paul'.

The Lord saved him and called him to preach, and before long he became pastor of a large congregation. By that time he had his degree and was studying for his doctorate, but, despite splendid progress in his studies and a good measure of success as a pastor, he was a very dissatisfied man. He was a Christian, but his life was not Christ-like; he had the Spirit of God within him, but he did not enjoy the Spirit's presence or experience His power. He thought to himself, 'I am a preacher of the Gospel and the pastor of a church. I tell my people they should love the Word of God, but I do not really love it myself. I exhort them to pray, but I myself have little inclination to pray. I tell them to live a holy life, but my own life is not holy. I warn them not to love the world, and, though outwardly I shun it, yet in my heart I myself still love it dearly.' In his distress he cried to the Lord to cause him to know the power of the indwelling Spirit, but though he prayed and prayed for months, no answer came. Then he fasted and besought the Lord to show him any hindrance there might be in his life. That answer was not long in coming, and it was this: 'I long that you should know the power of My Spirit, but your heart is set on something that I do not wish you to have. You have yielded to me all but one thing, and that one thing you are holding to yourself - your Ph.D.' Well, to you or me it might be of little consequence whether we were addressed as plain 'Mr. Paul' or as 'Dr. Paul', but to him it was his very life. He had dreamed of it from childhood and laboured for it all through his youth, and now the thing he prized above all was almost within his grasp. In two short months it would be his.

So he reasoned with the Lord in this wise: 'Is there any harm for me to be a Doctor of Philosophy? Will it not bring much more glory to Thy Name to have a Dr. Paul preaching the Gospel than a plain Mr. Paul?' But God does not change His mind, and all Mr. Paul's sound reasoning did not alter the Lord's word to him. Every time he prayed about the matter he got the same answer. Then, reasoning having failed, he resorted to bargaining with the Lord. He promised to go here or there, to do this or that, if only the Lord would allow him to have his doctor's degree; but still the Lord did not change His mind. And all the while Mr. Paul was becoming more and more hungry to know the fulness of the Spirit. This state of affairs continued to within two days of his final examination.

It was Saturday, and Mr. Paul settled down to prepare his sermon for the following day, but, study as he would, he could get no message. The ambition of a lifetime was just within reach of realisation, but God made it clear that he must choose between the power he could sway through a doctor's degree and the power of God's Spirit swaying his life. That evening he yielded. 'Lord', he said, 'I am willing to be plain Mr. Paul all my days, but I want to know the power of the Holy Ghost in my life.'

He rose from his knees and wrote a letter to his examiners, asking to be excused from the examination on the Monday, and giving his reason. Then he retired, very happy, but not conscious of any unusual experience. Next morning he told his congregation that for the first time in six years he had no sermon to

preach, and explained how it came about. The Lord blessed that testimony more abundantly than any of his well-prepared sermons, and from that time God blessed and owned him in an altogether new way. From that day he knew separation from the world, no longer as an outward thing but as a deep inward reality, and in daily experience he knew the blessedness of the Spirit's presence and power.

God is waiting for a settlement of all our contro versies with Him. With Mr. Paul it was a question of his doctor's degree, but with us it may be something quite different. Our absolute surrender of ourselves to the Lord generally hinges upon some one particular thing, and God is after that one thing. He must have it, for He must have our all. Iwas greatly impressed by something a great national leader wrote in his autobiography: ' I want nothing for myself ; I want everything for my country.' If a man can be willing that his country should have everything and he himself nothing, cannot we say to our God: 'Lord, Iwant nothing for myself; Iwant all for Thee. I will what Thou wilt, and I want to have nothing outside Thy will.' Not until we take the place of a servant can He take His place as Lord. He is not calling us to devote ourselves to His cause: He is asking us to yield ourselves to His will. Are you willing for anything He wills?

Another friend of mine, like my friend Mr. Paul, had a controversy with the Lord. Before his conversion he fell in love, and as soon as he was saved he sought to win the one he loved to the Lord, but she would have nothing to do with spiritual things. The Lord made it clear to him that his relations with that girl must be broken off, but he was deeply devoted to her, so he evaded the issue and continued to serve the Lord and to win souls for Him. But he became conscious of his need for holiness, and that consciousness marked the beginning of dark days for him. He asked for the Spirit's fulness that he might have power to live a holy life, but the Lord seemed continually to ignore his request.

One morning he had to preach in another city and he spoke from Psalm 73. 25: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." On his return home he went to a prayermeeting, and there a sister read out the very same verse from which, unknown to her, he had just preached, and followed it with the question: 'Can we truly say : " There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee "'? There was power in that word. It struck right home to his heart and he had to admit to himself that he could not truthfully say that he desired no one in Heaven or earth apart from his Lord. He saw, there and then, that for him everything hinged upon his willingness to give up the girl he loved.

For some it might not have involved much, but for him it was everything. So he began to reason with the Lord: 'Lord I will go to Tibet and work for Thee there if I may marry that girl'. But the Lord seemed to care a great deal more about his relationship with that girl than about his going to Tibet, and no amount of reasoning on his part availed to effect any change of emphasis on the part of the Lord. The controversy went on for several months, and when again the young man pleaded for the fulness of the Spirit, the Lord still pointed to the same thing. But that day the Lord triumphed, and that young man looked up to Him and said: 'Lord, I can truly say now, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee "'.' And that was the beginning of a new life for him.

A forgiven sinner is quite different from an ordinary sinner, and a consecrated Christian is quite different from an ordinary Christian. May the Lord bring us to a definite issue regarding the question of His Lordship. If we do yield wholly to Him and claim the power of the indwelling Spirit, we need wait for no special feelings or supernatural manifestations, but can simply look up and praise Him that something has already happened. We can confidently thank Him that the glory of God has already filled His temple. " Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" " Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have from God?"

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