



THE COMFORTER HAS COME.

THE characteristic fact of *this* day, beginning with Pentecost (Acts ii.) and lasting until the taking up of the saints (1 Thess. iv. 15-18,) is the presence of the Holy Spirit. If we look in John xiv. we notice two things of immense importance from the lips of our Lord Himself, at a time of the greatest solemnity.

All the old system had passed away. He had come, and been rejected by the nation of Israel, and having put forth a few of His sheep from that fold had gone before them, gathering to Himself outside of all that was on the earth. And now, in spirit beyond the cross, the tomb and the resurrection, He leads them into the knowledge of the new place and what He will do for them, while He is away preparing a place for them. His place and theirs (ours), is no more of the world, as on the earth as an abiding thing. These things are true of them;—they are His own; He loves them, and unto the end; and they are in the world, though not of it. These things, then, must He do for them, cast as they are into His company henceforth, as into His conditions and nature. He must see to keeping their walk clean; to their comfort while He is absent; and that they be properly gathered to Him in the end. These are given in the wondrous service of washing their feet; (chap. xiii) and in the promise of coming Himself for them, to receive them unto Himself; and in the promise to send the Holy Spirit. HE is the One that is to fill the place of Christ, in His absence. He is to glorify Christ, taking of His things alone and showing them unto Christ's own.

It is needful to distinguish between what Christ has done, and what the Holy Spirit does. All the facts pertaining to the Christian calling and standing and life and hope, are by Christ alone. They all flow out of what He

has accomplished by the one offering, and from what He is as the Risen Man in heaven.

But could we live on mere intellectual facts, however established? Now, remember these are essential. They must be true, or there is nothing for us. Christ died and is at the right hand of God. He sits there, having finished the work which the Father gave Him to do. He is the truth; all fullness dwells in Him; all the counsels of God are in Him; all joy is in Him. God is now happy in Him; and the word He gives us is the good news of the glory of the happy God, linking us forever with all that glory and joy. These are ours; Christ is ours; all things are ours. How shall we enter into the reality of them? "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God" (1 Cor. ii. 12.) That answers the question. He has meant that we should know distinctly as our own, enter into the power of all these things as native to them, breathe them, live in them, enjoy them, be at home in them, as much so as Christ Himself. Let us look at a few of these things that are made ours in this manner by the Holy Spirit.

1. SALVATION.—In Eph. i. 13, this is told us: "In whom ye, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your *salvation*, in whom after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit." Upon believing the good news from God that Christ died for us, and taking it as our own, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit. Sealing is setting apart and marking as one's own. The Holy Spirit, thus according to the promise of the Lord Jesus, having come, dwells in the believer, giving him the joyful response to the fact that he is saved. He not only knows it because the word says so, but he enters into it, takes it as his native and normal condition. His heart knows it and he walks in the light of it. (Acts viii. 17, x. 44-47, xi. 15; Rom. viii. 9, x. 5, xv. 16; 1 Cor. vi. 19; 2 Cor. i. 21, 22.)

2. SONSHIP.—The Spirit whom we have received is distinctly the Spirit of sonship. We are sons of God, as Christ, the New Man, is. For this purpose, to this rank,

were we born anew. As many as receive *Him*, even as many as believe on Him, get this position. It is characteristic of this day. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father!" (Gal. iv. 5.) No fact is clearer than this, that believers of this day are children of God, born so, partakers of the divine nature by being in Christ. They were quickened and raised up together with Him, and seated in heavenly places in Christ. Now *are* we sons (children) of God. But the fact might be powerless to us, a mere statement, a proposition at which we might gaze and wonder, save that the Holy Spirit dwells within us to give the response, the filial delight in God our Father, the home feeling. By Him we enter into it as our own; He witnesses *with* our spirit that we are sons. One might be human but without the spirit of a man—an idiot, for instance; a son without the filial love in his heart, an unnatural son in that. But with the spirit of the man and of the son, he is able to enter into and enjoy the relationship. Even so is it with the Spirit of God. Thus we distinguish between the fact and the apprehension of the fact to our own souls, and in the tone of our lives. (Rom. viii. 25, i. 6; Gal. ii. 20, 21, iii. 3, iv. 5, 6, 28, 29, vi. 1; John iii. 22-24.)

3. HEIRSHIP. — "If sons, heirs!" Yes, absolutely heirs of God! Heirs now, not of heaven, not of salvation, though we have these; but of God, heirs by birth, of what God has and of what He will enter upon in the new creation. Rom. viii. gives us this as well as the sonship.

But though we may repeat the words as true, they are made true to our hearts by the Holy Spirit. By Him we know that the whole creation is unfit for us as sons, that it groans and travails in pain, and by Him we groan. Otherwise, though we are heirs, we should be satisfied with things as they are in this world; or if not, simply unhappy about them, not grasping that which is to come. It is alone by the Holy Spirit that we are lifted into fellowship with God's mind about this world, and kept from thinking that all things are improving and going on finely. But knowing we are saved, we know as a reality to the heart that we are saved with reference to the

heavenly, the new creation, and so are saved *in* the hope, not "*by* hope," for none but Christ can save. So, spurning all here, we wait with patience the coming Lord, and the coming inheritance of glory with Him. The Holy Spirit is the earnest of all this. (Rom. viii. 12-24.)

4. PRAYER.—This, too, is the child's privilege. It belongs to him to ask of his Father. But the fact of the place and the privilege, does not beget the knowledge and sense of the right things to be asked for. We might ask for things pertaining to the old man, to this world. We know not by the mere fact of being there what to pray for as we ought; but by the Holy Spirit we do. He makes intercession for us. The groans we cannot utter, He utters. And He that searches the heart, knows the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for us according to God, that is, according to the purpose of God; that being sons we should, as the consummation in the glory, be conformed to the image of His Son. Prayer is thus in the Spirit, He giving in the heart, the apprehension of our own place of nearness and boldness, and of what is fitting to be asked for there. (Rom. viii. 26-27; 1 Cor. xiv. 15; Ephes. vi. 18.)

5. MEMBERSHIP OF CHRIST.—It is distinctly the work of the Holy Spirit to set forth this truth that we, as saved, are members of Christ. By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body. Thus He links us corporately with the risen Christ, forming the New Man. Each member, indwelt by the one Spirit, must, if He act freely, respond to this wonderful fact and be drawn toward every other through the Head. By His leading all take their place practically in subjection to the Head, He being all and in all. And blessed and perfect this is, the new thing that God has created that could have no place nor meaning before the Holy Spirit came, not only itself being kept secret, but all truth or suggestion concerning it being hidden in God; (Ephes. iv. 3-4, 12-17.) In the same line would be exercise of

6. MINISTRY.—This is the bringing of the word to men or to saints for their perfecting, for the salvation of sinners, and for the building up of the body in love. Added to this, is the contributing of every member, every

joint of supply for the increase of the whole. Take the bare fact of Ministry, what would it amount to? The fact that one and another may speak and be engaged in this or that service, would result in confusion and every wind of doctrine. And this would be supplemented by the arrangements of men to keep things in order, clericalism. But by the actual presence of the Holy Spirit, known and acknowledged, all moves by His direction, exalting and ministering Christ. He keeps each in his place, distributing and using each as He will. (1 Cor. xii. 4-13; Ephes. iv. 7-12; Acts ii. 1-21.)

7. HOPE.—The Lord Jesus himself is our hope. Everywhere through the Epistles the eye of the believer is turned towards His coming, and his life to waiting and watching; serving while he waits. But clear and positive as all the assurances of His coming are, they would be but the powerless doctrinal statements of the theologian, without the holding of them in the heart as a reality by the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit and the Bride that say, Come! reaching out toward Him in all the attractiveness of His person; or, the Spirit knowing all the counsels and purposes of God centered in Him, and the Bride led and taught in all the things of Christ by the Spirit. It has been a dreary place here for the Holy Spirit, whom the world cannot receive because it sees Him not, neither knows Him; and the Bride, the Church, having caught the word of the coming of her Lord, and henceforth having fellowship with the Spirit, as to all this dreariness, they both eagerly cry to Him to come. She is indebted to the Holy Spirit for both the knowledge of this precious truth and the power of it over the heart, as the lingering days and the far spent night near the day-spring. No mere doctrine, no mere statement of truth finds affinity in our minds or hearts, nor in the renewed mind could it find continuance. God alone—the Holy Spirit abiding in us, can keep the things of God within us. “What man knoweth the things of man save the *spirit* of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” (1 Cor. ii. 11; Rom. v. 5, viii. 23-25, xv. 13.)

8. WORSHIP.—As sons we are brought into the presence of God—the holiest—to adore and worship on the ground of what God is in Himself, and what He is to us, what He has done for us. This, as to our position and the object of it. He has gone out seeking worshippers. It is the purpose of our being new creatures. But it is alone by the Spirit that the heart enters into it. He alone makes Christ and His work a reality. Christ is in us thus a present truth. By Him, thus made ours, we offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. (Heb. xiii. 15; John iv. 23; 1 Cor. xiv. 15.)

Now a few words in conclusion: We see the origin of all the uncertainty and confusion among Christians of the present day. The Holy Spirit is denied, ignored or grieved. All the facts of Christianity—the certainty of salvation, the new man, sonship, the coming of the Lord, heirship in glory, the heavenly calling, and the church, are true, and make up the total of revelation to us. And these are all true to us the moment we, as sinners, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. We are then saved and associated with Christ, and saved for the glory. Now the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ, takes of His things, these very things, and shows them unto us. He does not make these things; they are in Christ, and all of them are ours the moment we have Christ; He only brings them to us. When He comes to abide in us, these are the things in which He deals. It is not attainment, that is, getting one blessing after another. God "*has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,*" at once upon believing. We may, and we do, grow in the apprehension, and the joy of these things belonging to the Christian state; but this is by allowing full place to the Holy Spirit, that He be not grieved.

And this explains the sad state of mind of many believers. They are grieving the Holy Spirit. What wonder if there is doubt about being saved, and ignorance of standing and hope, and of the purpose in being called and saved at all, and a lack of delight and sense of nearness to Christ and God? There is, there can be, no truth for this day, aside from the Holy Spirit

What wonder if there be deadness then? What wonder if hoping to be saved at last takes the place of assurance of present salvation; legality, of sonship and liberty; earthly religiousness, of the heavenly calling; human improvement, of the new man perfected by one offering; hope of the world getting better, of the coming of the Lord; and "going to church" and formalism, of intelligent and happy worship?

It is not in accordance with the mind of God, therefore, that we should pray now for the coming of the Holy Spirit or sing to Him to come, as though He were not here. All prayer and singing, to be acceptable, is *in* the Spirit, who leads our petitions and praises. There was a time when He was not given (John vii. 39) because Jesus was not yet glorified; but on His ascension the Holy Spirit was sent down to abide in those that are Christ's own. And so clearly and definitely is this true, that if anyone have not the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit that was in Christ, he is none of His. His own are as distinctly sanctified, that is, set apart to Him and to God, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, as by the blood of Christ. They are forever redeemed by the latter, and forever marked off as His by the former. He has come to stay, as Christ promised (John xiv. 16, 17.) The word about giving His Holy Spirit to them that ask (Luke xi. 13,) was for the people before He had come; but since that (Acts ii.) He has come to abide in us and with us till the Lord shall come.

Peter declared by the Spirit, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel," about pouring out the Spirit. He had thus come to the Jews to prepare a people for the returning Lord. In Acts iv. 31, all of the thousands saved were filled with the Holy Spirit, who made them give up their lands, the earthly possessions, because of the rejection on the part of the nation of the offer for Christ to come as King and reign over them, restoring them as a people. Henceforward He became the earnest of the heavenly, instead; and so Stephen filled with the Holy Spirit looked up into heaven and seeing Jesus there cried "Lord Jesus receive my Spirit." And so now believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit

until the day of redemption. (See 2 Cor. i. 21-22; Eph. i. 13-14, iv. 30.)

Let us accept Him thus, having fellowship with all that He brings; for our fellowship is with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me; for He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I that He shall take of mine and shall shew it unto you.” (John xvi. 7, 13-15.)

“If we live in the Spirit let us also walk in the Spirit” (Gal. v. 26.)

M. T.

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