

HIS INDWELLING PRESENCE

Intimate Studies in the Things of the Spirit

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CHAPTER FIVE

HIS INWORKING—OUR SERVICE

“Work out your own salvation . . . for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12, 13). **“He is able to do . . . according to the power that worketh in us”** (Ephesians 3:20).

What is Christian service? Is it something we do for Him? Or is it something He does in and through us? These two questions localize the line of cleavage running through the camp of Christ’s followers today. Are we to serve Him as best we may? Or does He purpose in sovereign wisdom to serve Himself through us?

If we take the former view, human personality is the important factor in service. Since we are doing it, we must initiate it, plan it, scheme it, devise ways and means, by hook or crook, to compass it. If we are faithful, we praise ourselves; if we are successful, we congratulate ourselves. If we seem to be failing, we blame our methods and proceed to change them; or we call in to help us men whose personalities promise well, irrespective of relationship to Him. How far afield this view may carry us is well illustrated by the many forms of flagrantly worldly methods in vogue in Christian institutions today.

If we take the latter view, divine personality comes at once to the place of dominance. Since He is really the power at work, our dependence is upon Him. We must seek His mind, have His wisdom, permit Him freedom to initiate, guide and direct. We will wish to know His plan that there may be no withholding of the strength of His might in carrying it to a conclusion.

The practical result is immediately apparent; we will find our lives consciously centered in Him, and continuously dependent upon Him.

Which of these views is correct, scripturally and experimentally, is readily determined for us by reference to the quotations that head this chapter. Meditation upon them yields the following:

1. *He is not only indwelling but “inworking” us.*

The Greek verb is *energeo*, from which is derived our energy. He is the inner, inwardly working power, the energy of our lives. And more—the wording of the sentence in the Greek makes this doubly emphatic: **“For God it is who is inworking in you.”**

2. *It is an effectual and purposeful inworking:*

“both the willing and the inworking, for the sake of His good pleasure.” His Indwelling is designed to secure a life lived in the sphere of His pleasure—always **“good”** as ours is not—not to our pleasing, but to His. Yet this is not arbitrarily superimposed. Quite the opposite, for He causes **“the willing and the inworking”** so to be inwrought that it comes to be as much ours as His. How wonderful! What becomes of the behavioristic theories of psychology in face of such a fact?

3. *The measure of His power is limited by the degree of freedom accorded by the human personality: “according to the power that worketh in us.”*

Under the New Covenant our responsibility is a tremendous one, but it is never that of independent initiation or action; always that of rightly relating ourselves to His indwelling, inworking, energizing presence.

4. *The possibilities engendered by such facts far exceed our powers of imagination.*

Hence the exhortation: **“Work out your own salvation”**—a salvation peculiar and personal to you, for you have the Holy Spirit indwelling you, and the possibilities are not limited to your human effort but to His divine power. Whatever “salvation” may have meant to Paul or Peter, or others, you have the same Spirit working in you for His good pleasure. Your responsibility is so to live as not to thwart His inworking purposes; rather, that your living and serving shall be the outworking of that which He is inworking.

We are now prepared to see the further and fuller reach of His indwelling Presence, beyond that disclosed in the studies of our last chapter. The Holy Spirit, we saw, indwells us and thereby accomplishes our Sanctification—an adjustment of our personal lives to His own holy person and character, to the dropping away of sin’s power over us and the implanting of His imparted attributes in us. But to what purpose is all of this? For the beautifying of our personal lives? To terminate upon us? Not at all. His work in us is that He may have an instrument adjusted to His use, thus to work through us to the blessing of others.

Here is an added incentive to a life of holiness. It is as a “good connection” over the phone. The buzzing of other voices, so disturbing and distracting, dies away and we get clearly the voicing of the Spirit’s mind and will in the soul. **“Whosoever hath, to him shall be given,”** was spoken of a hearing ear, because of which Jesus said to those who possessed it, **“It is given unto you to know . . . but to them it is not given”** (Matthew 13:12, 11). The hidden secret of a life of service lies back in the heart attuned to hear the whisperings of His will for us.

I. His Inworking

We must first see the fact of the Inworking of the Spirit, with all that He is intent upon accomplishing in and through us, since it is in Him, energizing us, that our service finds its source of inspiration and strength.

1. HE INSTRUCTS US.

“Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. . . But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him” (1 John 2:20; 2:27).

This is said of all believers. When we believed unto salvation, the Holy Spirit, by His In-coming, anointed us as His own. We not only received His life by the New Birth, but we were also endowed with His mind, the mind of Christ. But this mind for things spiritual, this capacity to understand—see I Corinthians 2:9-14, must be developed, much as the immature mind of the child. So the Holy Spirit takes up in us the work of instructor; we, as it were, go to school to the Spirit. This is just the work Jesus promised He would do:

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26).

“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 show you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you” (John 16: 13, 14).

What He is bent upon being and doing in us as sons of God, in the capacity of instructor and guide, is delineated in what He came to be in the Son of God: **“the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord”** (Isaiah 11:2). What we call “common sense” would not be so uncommon; rather, understanding, good judgment, wise counsel, spiritual insight would be universal characteristics of God’s people, if only the Spirit were unhindered in His Inworking.

But the anointing does not eventuate in mere instruction or quickened illumination. Anointing is in order to service. Of Jesus we read: **“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good”** (Acts 10:38). Do we long to serve? Then let us appropriate—work out—the anointing we have, by way of preparation. Whatever other instruction we may be privileged to secure, and much is needed to serve our day, like the Thessalonians we must be **“taught of God”** in order to be His true servants. This is the inwrought work of the Spirit.

2. HE EMPOWERS US.

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you” (Acts 1:8).

The Lord Jesus had carefully instructed them as to their need of spiritual power, lacking which they should not venture forth in their own strength. The power they needed He also promised them, a promise that was fulfilled in the In-coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

But, for the promise of power His wording is not “*in*,” but “**upon**.” The same is true of the actual event; not only were they filled with the Spirit, but His presence, manifested as fire, was “**upon each of them**.”

It is language that suggests the superimposing of divine power, the overshadowing of our impotence with His omnipotence. It is the New Covenant fulfilling of the Word of the Lord through Zechariah: “**Not by might, nor by power (such as men possess), but by My Spirit, saith the Lord.**” Throughout the Church age He is “**upon**” us, to empower for service.

3. HE CALLS US TO SERVICE.

“**As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed . . .**” (Acts 13:2-4).

Here we recognize the Holy Spirit as the Great Executive of the Church, laying her plans and taking measures to carry them out. To do so He must select men for His service, set them apart, send them forth. Paul, in particular, had been for a protracted period under the tutelage of the Spirit (see Galatians 1:15-17). Fresh from this inwrought instruction, with a “**knowledge of the mystery of Christ**” that was to shape the entire course of the Church, the Spirit now called him into the service for which He Himself had qualified him.

It is of the utmost importance that we have a call; that we hear and heed the call. There are many agencies through which we may enter Christian service, all fallible in judgment, limited in resource. If we wish an appointment, we should apply first at Headquarters. There is the Spirit, infinite in wisdom, mighty in counsel, possessed of all heavenly resources and all earthly appointments.

Moreover, when He calls, hear and heed. Many are the lives today that are sadly set aside because they temporized with the Great Executive. His will is sovereign. If He wants you, is willing to use you, be sure you want nothing so much as the privilege of saying to Him: “Thy Will—Nothing More; Nothing Less; Nothing Else.”

4. HE APPOINTS TO PARTICULAR SERVICE.

“**For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles**” (Galatians 2:8, R.V.). The Greek is *energeo*—to work in. Rotherham translates, “**inwardly wrought in.**” To the Spirit’s In-working is attributed the fact that Peter found his ministry among the Jews and Paul among the Gentiles. He prepared Peter for a particular work and appointed him to it. So also with Paul.

By no possibility could they exchange positions; each one’s work was divinely selected and assigned. They wrought as the Spirit had diligently wrought in them.

The eighth chapter of Acts shows us Philip moved about by the will of the Spirit, assigning him definite tasks. He interrupts his preaching to crowds at Samaria and stations him on a desert highway that he may speak to one man, and he an Ethiopian. It was the Spirit's strategy, thereby to introduce the Gospel into the continent of Africa.

This done, He removed Philip westward and assigned him to a preaching tour of the Mediterranean coast (Acts 8:5-40).

Every believer should look upon his life as Spirit-planned and Spirit-appointed.

We should be as open to the Spirit's changes of program as was Philip, Paul or Peter. We should never assume that what we knew of the Spirit's assignment for yesterday will suffice for today or tomorrow. And, knowing that the Spirit must man a world-wide work, far more widely scattered than any army or navy service, we should be eagerly open to removal and relocation, wherever we may serve His purposes best.

We think of a dear, good friend in the ministry, one who had been much used of God. But he became possessed of a house. From that time forth he could hear no call beyond a limited radius of his house. What a travesty on the executive work of the Holy Spirit! Putting Him on a tether—thus far and no farther. Dictating to Him where He may, or may not, send us. Of course, all such are set aside; He does not accept such humanly imposed limitations.

5. HE SPEAKS THROUGH US TO MAN.

“Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in ail wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily” (Colossians 1:28, 29).

Paul thus describes, and ascribes, his ministry of the Gospel: **“According to His inward-working which is inwardly-working in me with power”** (Rotherham). He would have it known that the originating power of it is not with him, that it is wrought in him. No wonder he cries: **“Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.”** And looking back upon his ministry at Corinth, he writes of it:

“And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (I Corinthians 2:4-5).

In this, Paul is but like His Master, for the Lord Jesus Christ bore the same testimony concerning His own earthly ministry: **“The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works”** (John 14:10).

Tracing this to His intimate union with the Father, He assures us that He is providing for equal, and even greater, works on our part, by His ascension to the Father and our union with Him in the Spirit.

6. HE SPEAKS THROUGH US TO GOD.

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26-27).

It is the indwelling Spirit of whom this is said. He is the Intercessor in us as Christ our Lord is the Intercessor above us (vs. 34). True prayer is that which is wrought in us by the Spirit; He is its prompter and promoter, its wisdom and power. In this He overshadows our confessed weakness and inability to pray as we ought. Moreover, He is in utmost accord with the Father; the mind of the One is the mind of the Other. The prayer He prompts in us cannot fail of its answer.

In the Holy Spirit’s loving concern for His own—His saints or holy ones—His inwrought prayer becomes a constant, persistent crying out on their behalf: **“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints”** (Ephesians 6:18). Faithful and watchful is the Spirit in brooding love over His children, and He instills into our prayer-life a like faithfulness and watchfulness for their welfare. What a gracious prayer ministry He maintains in the hearts of His own on behalf of His own!

7. HE BEARS FRUIT THROUGH US.

“I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing . . . Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit” (John 15:5, 8).

The Vine and Branch teaching does not mention the Spirit by name, but He is the inworking power of it all. He has come to abide in us that we may have through Him the Abiding Life. By Him we are grafted into the Vine; by Him its life flows into us and bears fruit through us. It is here we gain our most comprehensive conception of the Spirit’s Inworking, seen as the normal, vital, indispensable, “abiding” reality of the believer’s living and serving. Only as we abide have we the position, the life, the fruit of believers. But we do not abide of ourselves. We abide because He abides.

The result of this relationship, positioned in Christ, cultured by the Father, wrought out through the Spirit, is but the expression of these vital forces, in:

- **“fruit”** (vs. 2);
- **“more fruit”** (vs. 2);
- **“much fruit”** (w. 5, 8).

This is Christian service at its highest. In it the human, the branch, has nothing whereof to boast; it is but the channel. In it, however, the Godhead, in union with the believer, is living His life and working His works, to His own glory.

II. Our Service

Doubtless, in the foregoing, we have fully sensed the fact that Christian service is not something of our own selecting, nor yet of our own executing—not anything disassociated from Him who is the Great Servant in the Godhead, but always something springing from our relationship to Him, something wrought out by Him through us. By Him; through us: a mutual, practical partnership. Between His Inworking, as above unfolded, and its outworking in service, now to be considered, there is clearly a close, abiding correspondence such as we might expect.

1. WE ARE HIS WORKMEN.

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:15).

Our thought turns to the long centuries in which the Holy Spirit was giving authorship to His Book of Truth; the men that He chose for the work; how He caused them to write, carried along on the stream of divine thought beyond their power even to comprehend the import of their own words; the marvels of the divine plan, involving the sending of the Son to redeem the race; His testifying **“beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow”**; His purposes in the Church, culminating in the perfections of the coming ages.

Nothing is so essential as that the world know the truths of this Book. Yet to men it is a sealed treasure-house. Shall its message of wisdom be lost to them, when to know it would mean salvation? Shall men perish for want of understanding what the Spirit has prepared for them? The Spirit says, No! He has a definite plan. It is this: that, *just as He used men to write His Truth, He will continue to use men to interpret and dispense it.* To this end He comes into the believer as the Anointing One, quickening him into an understanding of the Truth. This done, He calls him to be His workman in spiritual things, bidding him go about His work with earnest purpose to show himself approved unto God by the way he handles the Word of Truth, apportioning and dispensing it to his fellows according to its intent and meaning. That the Holy Spirit should call and use men of our day, even us, for so sacred a work, fraught with the eternal destiny of souls, should solemnize all our hearts in the purpose, as workmen qualified by His Inworking, to hold forth the word of life in all its power to save.

2. WE ARE HIS WITNESSES.

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me” (Acts 1:8).

“My witnesses”; made such by the In-working of the Spirit whose genius it is to make much of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the Lord Jesus Christ’s chief witnesser during this age; but He has qualified us and drawn us into partnership with Himself in His witnessing task.

Of this partnership Jesus spoke:

“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me: and ye also shall bear witness” (John 15:26, 27).

To qualify as witnesses of Christ we must have a personal, first-hand knowledge of Him, whereby we may **“speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.”** Moreover we must have a personal experience of Him, that our testimony to the transforming facts of the Gospel may not be belied by an untransformed life; rather, that lip and life speak the same language, as indeed they did at the martyr’s stake, the place of supreme witness. Indeed, the Greek, “martyr,” means readiness to witness with a conviction which may lead one to give up his life.

Such knowledge, such transformation, such conviction can come only as it is inwrought by the Holy Spirit. He only can so reveal to us our risen Christ that we may say of Him, in the glad exultation of His triumph: **“We have seen the Lord.”** He only can so make real to us our glorified Lord that we may say out of our experience that we **“know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.”**

A most touching scene was enacted not long since, in one of our well-known art galleries. A blind man was seen walking through the galleries, accompanied by an intimate friend. Arm in arm they stood before each painting while the one with good vision explained and described every detail, and his friend, with countenance aglow, heard of the beauties portrayed upon the various canvases. At times the blind man was filled with evident enthusiasm, and later expressed his admiration of the pictures he had been privileged to see. He had seen them through his friend, the one at his side to lend him sight and give him knowledge of what otherwise he would not have known. It is just this the Holy Spirit does for us. He sees the face of our Lord Jesus Christ in His beauty and glory. He causes us to see Him too. He imparts to us His own enthusiasm for Him. He makes Him real. So the Spirit witnesses of Him to us; and we witness of Him to others.

3. WE ARE HIS AMBASSADORS.

“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (II Corinthians 5:20).

Having qualified us as witnesses, able to speak of Him, the Spirit calls us into an office where we must needs speak for Him. It is the office of Ambassador, than which there is none more honorable or dignified among men.

It is an office in which one is sent to live among those who do not have his citizenship, there to represent his government and his people. In its exercise he is not to speak his own mind or voice his own opinions, but to catch and truly convey the mind and will of the one he represents. Finding himself unable longer sincerely or successfully to represent him, he should cease to exercise the office.

Of this Christian diplomatic office, representing the Court of Heaven among men who do not own allegiance to our Christ, we may say that the Holy Spirit is the Chief Ambassador.

Just as the centurion recognized in Jesus one clothed with authority, so Jesus assured us that the Spirit would act and speak in a like capacity: **“He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak”** (John 16:13).

The Holy Spirit is a true and faithful Ambassador, refusing ever to speak from Himself, as though He were the seat of authority when He is here to represent Another. Rest assured He will never lead us into any such breach of office. But there are two ways in which we may forfeit our ambassadorship:

First, by saying things from ourselves, either that which is unauthorized or that which is contrary to authority. The United States has summarily dismissed more than one ambassador for such offense. It is a serious matter. We cannot afford such misrepresentation. God has left but little room to misunderstand His mind, with His Word of Truth in our hands and His Spirit of Truth in our hearts. We stand amazed, then, at the foolish babblings, the idle speculations, the open questionings, even sharp contradictions of His revealed truth, proceeding from the mouths of His called and constituted ambassadors. Surely they do not realize the seriousness of the offense nor the accounting into which He must bring them.

Second, by refusing to speak from Him, as He bids. We are here **“in Christ’s stead.”** There are certain things He wants said. Yearningly He seeks to get His Gospel of Reconciliation out to men. If He cannot get utterance through us we have failed Him in the office to which He appointed us.

“A prominent clergyman in New England tells this experience of his: In the course of his pastoral work he was called to conduct the funeral service of a young woman who had died unexpectedly. As he entered the house he met the minister in charge of the mission church, where the family attended, and asked him, ‘Was Mary a Christian?’ To his surprise a pained look came into his face as he replied, ‘Three weeks ago I had a strong impulse to speak to her, but I did not; and I do not know. A moment later he met the girl’s Sunday School teacher and asked her the same question. Quickly the tears came, as she said, ‘Two weeks ago, Doctor, a voice seemed to say to me, ‘Speak to Mary,’ and I knew what it meant, and I intended to, but I did not, and I do not know.’ Deeply moved by these unexpected answers, a few minutes later he met the girl’s mother, and thinking doubtless to give her an opportunity to speak a word that would bring comfort to her heart, he said quietly, ‘Mary was a Christian girl?’ The tears came quick and hot to the mother’s eyes, as she sobbed out, ‘One week ago a voice came to me saying, ‘Speak to Mary,’ and I thought of it, but I did not at the time, and you know how unexpectedly she went away and I do not know” (S. D. Gordon).

Could anything be more unspeakably pathetic? The Holy Spirit, lovingly anticipating a crucial hour, wrought in three people, a pastor, a teacher, a mother, seeking the use of their lips to speak His message for which he had doubtless prepared the young heart, and He was denied utterance by all three. Let us ask ourselves whether we also are refusing equally specific assignments.

If so, by what right do we continue in office?

4. WE ARE HIS HERALDS OF A WORLD-WIDE GOSPEL.

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:18-20).

The Gospel is “*good news*.” It is meant to be told. Nay, it must be told. Further, our Lord Jesus had a plan for its world-wide telling: **“Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations.”** Moreover, He declared that the Holy Spirit would take up the program and see to its carrying out, using His followers as His heralds:

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

Here is a program of world-wide expansion, with the Holy Spirit pledged to put it into operation. How? By His inworking of it in us and our outworking of it through Him. That He immediately set about the task, working true to specifications, is evident from a study of the Book of Acts. The program of Acts 1:8 is the outline of the book. *

*** The Acts is a record of the Spirit’s expanding program:**

I. Introduction – 1:1-26.

II. In Jerusalem and all Judea – 2:1 to 8:4.

III. In Samaria – 8:26 to 28:31.

IV. Unto the Uttermost Part of the Earth – (9:1 to 12:25).

In Anticipation (8:26-40).

In Preparation (9:1-12:25).

In Realization (13:1 to 28:31).

It is an exhibition of the mind of the Spirit regarding world-wide evangelization. It is equally a demonstration of His purpose, in this age, to select and qualify men as His Gospel heralds, appointing them their work and empowering them for its performance.

Down to our own day there is no reason for thinking that He has changed either His mind or His method. He is still working by the plan. He is definitely committed to the program. He is seeking to work the same mind in us, and is prepared to use us in proportion as we accept His program, in principle, as our own. It involves on our part:

(1) The cordial recognition of His executive sovereignty, in the exercise of which He must be free to place His men wherever He will, to the ends of the earth, much as the manager of an industrial plant must say just where his men shall work.

(2) The heartiest co-operation in His plan to tell the whole world the Good News, at whatever cost, to the refusal of other and various proposals, however promising or alluring.

Yet to meet these conditions is not natural to us, only as the Spirit in-works them. He has a universal mind for the carrying out of an eternal purpose; ours is provincial, for we see and think from our particular spot of earth. We think our country fair, a fit place to live always and serve. But He, holding the whole field in view, may have selected this as a favored birthplace for us, where He might train and culture us for a field of His choosing far out yonder. Knowing the Spirit's program, every Christian should seek to find His personal life-plan for him.

A needful warning against laggardness on the part of Christian heralds is found in the following parable: *

*** Adapted from *A Strange but True Story*, by Mrs. H. Grattan Guinness.**

A wealthy land-owner, cultivating some thousands of acres and much beloved by his large staff of laborers, before taking a necessary journey gave very explicit directions that the whole of the cultivated land was to be kept in hand, while all the marshy ground was to be reclaimed, the hills terraced and the poor mountain stretches fertilized, that not the smallest corner of the estate should remain barren or neglected. Ample resources were left to accomplish all this work.

Moreover, the owner being detained for many years, the number of tenants and laborers was vastly multiplied. What was his surprise, then, upon returning, to find the work unaccomplished, the moors and mountain wastes more wild and desolate than ever, rich virgin soil left untouched to bear briars and thistles, meadows barren through lack of cultivation. The greater part of the estate seemed scarcely to have been visited even.

Had they been idle? Some had. Very many had been most industrious, but in utmost disregard of directions they had expended their efforts upon the parks around their homes, so intent upon bringing them to a state of perfection that they many times quarreled through overlapping and interfering with their neighbors. The loss of labor consequent upon misdirected effort left vast areas of reclaimable soil wholly undeveloped and yet the laborers talked much about the owner's expressed purposes. They were always reading the directions he wrote, and said continually to one another: "You know we have to bring the whole property into order." But they did not do it. Despite the efforts of the few, and even when their resulting crops proved superabundant, the many failed to turn in and help. Were these servants fools? or traitors to their Lord? He said, **"Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature"** After 1900 years they had not even mentioned that there was a Gospel, to one-half of the world.

5. WE ARE HIS EPISTLES.

"The epistle of Christ . . . written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart . . . known and read of all men" (II Corinthians 3:3, 2).

The Spirit's purposes in us rise to still higher levels. He will have His truth known through us in a far more complete and convincing manner; not that men should hear it from our lips, but read it in our lives.

He, the Spirit of Truth, occupied Himself for centuries in producing the Book of Truth. In the centuries since He has been giving Himself to the production of living epistles of the same truth. And the proof positive for any and every generation is this, that, reading the truth of God in the Book in their hands, they turn and see the same truth living and walking before their eyes.

The believer is the world's Bible; and, many times, the only one it will read. How overwhelming the responsibility! That today there should be so much unbelief concerning Christ is a serious reflection upon His present-day epistles. Men should see in us that which would convert to Christ by its acceptance or condemn by its rejection. What a joy to preach the Gospel, were every Christian in the Church a living embodiment of its truth and power! How impossible the task when its professors belie its power.

Living epistles of Christ, circulating everywhere, do men read HIM aright in us? If not, there is need for a revised version. This the indwelling, inworking Spirit eagerly waits to effect.

The World's Bible

Christ has no hands but our hands
To do His work today,
He has no feet but our feet
To lead men in His way,
He has no tongue but our tongues
To tell men how He died,
He has no help but our help
To bring them to His side.

We are the only Bible
The careless: world will read,
We are the sinner's gospel,
We are the scoffer's creed,
We are the Lord's last message,
Given in deed and word.
What if the type is crooked?
What if the print is blurred?

What if our hands are busy
With other work than His?
What if our feet are walking
Where sin's allurements is?
What if our tongues are speaking
Of things His lips would scorn?
How can we hope to help Him
And hasten His return?

—Annie Johnson Flint.

6. WE ARE HIS PRAYER-PARTNERS.

“Praying in the Holy Spirit” (Jude 20).

He in us; we in Him. What a partnership, intimate and indissoluble, for carrying on the ministry of prayer! There is a mutuality in it that should challenge us to do our part. In the matter of prayer, what He works in us we must in undiminished measure work out.

Without doubt, for this Gospel age, the Holy Spirit is the Great Prayer. Visualize, for the moment, the task He has undertaken. All the possibilities of the Gospel of the Son of God, all the salvaging values of Calvary, the determining of the destiny of immortal souls thereby, the Spirit has taken to Himself in trust, to pass on and apply to the hearts and lives of men. He loves with the love of God the Father. He yearns with the compassion of Christ the Son. In His love, and in His yearning, how He prays. What intercession! What wonder He **“maketh intercession . . . with groanings which cannot be uttered.”** Something of the Son’s Gethsemane goes into the Spirit’s agonizing over sin.

His intercession is an inworking within us. But what poor prayer-partners we prove to be. How little of His agony takes fire in our spirits. How lightly His burden for the souls of men rests upon our hearts. Today, O Thou Spirit of all grace, we offer ourselves anew for this partnership of prayer. Pray Thou in us, and we will pray in Thee.

7. WE ARE HIS STEWARDS OF MANIFOLD GRACE.

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (I Peter 4:10).

The Greek word for **“steward”** means *“house-manager.”* But it is the same root word that is translated **“dispensation.”** When we are given a stewardship, we are given a dispensation, a responsibility in house management. So Paul describes his ministry to the Gentiles—Ephesians 3:2. But this is the Holy Spirit’s dispensation. He has undertaken to build and manage a spiritual house, the Church of the living God. We are called to share with Him this blessed work, a work of which Jesus spoke thus:

“Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over His household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing” (Luke 12:42, 43).

When we consider the greatness of the “house” the Holy Spirit is building and managing, extending into every city, hamlet and countryside, to the very earth-ends, with every home and heart a prospect for His gracious working; when we weigh the responsibility of dispensing His Word, by being **“instant in season, out of season,”** that all may receive their **“portion of meat in due season”**; when we match the variety of opportunity with the urgency of need, we say:

“Surely the Lord has an appointed place in which I may minister His manifold grace.”

Then, in quick response to our longing, comes the assurance that such is the case, that however limited our capabilities—not of gold, nor yet of silver, but perchance of wood, or even of earth—if we are only willing to be kept clean and fit for His use, He will rejoice over us and use us as a **“vessel unto honor”**:

“But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work” (II Timothy 2:20, 21).

III. The Exhortation

The Holy Spirit has given one brief word of admonition, embodying our responsibility in view of His Inworking: **“Quench not the Spirit”** (I Thessalonians 5:19).

The Spirit is as a fire, burning upon the altar of our hearts, seeking to come to expression as a sacred flame that will bear its own testimony as to His presence and do its own witnessing work of reproofing sin and lighting in the hearts of men a burning desire for Him whom to know is life eternal.

The reference is to the candlestick in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle, an imagery fulfilled in each New Covenant believer. The candlestick was supplied with oil, symbol of the Spirit. It was always lit, expressive of the constant, abiding Presence. It was the priest’s responsibility to see that it was not extinguished, that by its continuous burning it might bear its testimony and do its work.

Every believer is supremely responsible for giving to the Spirit His fullest and freest expression.

At no time should He strive in vain to speak His mind or perform His purposed work, because our powers are not placed unreservedly at His disposal. The sacred flame must not be stifled, suppressed or extinguished. He is graciously in-working us, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. The least we can do is to accord to Him the opportunity for unobstructed expression. **“Quench Not The Spirit.”**

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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