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THE EARLY MINISTRY OF JESUS.

– JAN. 26. – Luke 4:14-22. –

Golden Text – "And they were astonished at his doctrine; for his word was with power." – Luke 4:32.

WE HAVE before us in this lesson the greatest teacher that ever lived; and if we inquire wherein his power consisted, the answer is, It was the power of the holy spirit, which he had without measure. (John 3:34.) This is the secret of all power in the work of the Lord. Learning and worldly wisdom, or natural talents of fluency of speech, or oratory, are no substitutes for this indispensable requirement for the divine service. No preaching, no teaching is of value, except it be in the power of the holy spirit.

In this power our Lord Jesus came up from the wilderness into Galilee. How did he obtain this power? He obtained it in the same way his followers may obtain it; viz., by entire consecration to God, faithfulness to that consecration, and by communion with him in prayer and meditation upon his Word. The complete consecration our Lord had made and symbolized at Jordan; and while carefully studying the law and the prophets in order to an exact knowledge of the will of God, he had just endured a most subtle and severe conflict with the powers of darkness for forty days alone in the wilderness.* Through implicit faith in the wisdom, love and power of the Father, he came off that battlefield victorious, and filled with the power of that holy spirit which had given him the victory. Thus he was equipped with power from on high for the great work upon which he immediately entered. It was no wonder, indeed, that the people "were astonished at his doctrine; for his word was with power." "He taught them as one having authority [as one who knew the truth by an implicit faith in God which admitted of no doubt, and by the practical demonstration of its power upon his own heart],

and not as the scribes who had no such power, and no such insight into the holy things of God.

See our issue of August 1, 1894..

It is thus, and only thus, that the followers of Christ may also gain this power which will mightily convince men of the truth, and which will compel respect for it, even in those who are not prepared to receive it into good and honest hearts. The preacher or teacher acceptable to God must, therefore, like the Lord, be first sincerely and fully consecrated to God. Then, when tried and tempted, he must *prove* his faithfulness to that consecration. Then let him go forward in the work of the Lord with a resolute purpose, to do his will at all hazards of human approval or disapproval, or of human praise or persecution. Most likely, like the Lord himself, he will have some of both – at first some of the praise, but afterward the bitterness of persecution.

At first Jesus "taught in the synagogues, being glorified of all," "and all bore him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth;" but very soon his faithfulness to the truth, which rebuked their unrighteousness, turned the praise of the people into wrath and persecution. This is the reward that faithfulness to the truth is sure to bring in the present life; and those who find it so should rejoice in this fellowship in the sufferings of Christ. Every new trial of faith, patience and perseverance, and every new victory in such trial brings to the soldier of the cross added power of the holy spirit – a courage born of endurance, a confidence in God born of experience, and a zeal born of a human appreciation of the power and intrinsic worth of divine truth, and a fuller appreciation of the righteousness of God and of all his ways. In this light the Christian should view every trial that comes to him, and, by drawing near to God in it, seek that measure of his holy spirit which will enable him to overcome, and in the conflict to gain new strength for further service.

The text of our Lord's discourse on this occasion was chosen from Isaiah 61:1-3, which declared his commission from God to preach

the gospel – "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach," etc. This was the object of his anointing with the holy spirit. And this anointing needed no supplement of human authority. No Jewish ecclesiastics or councils had anything to do with giving him this authority. It came, as he showed, from God alone, through his inspired prophet.

In this connection we are also reminded that, through him, this same anointing has come upon every true member of the body of Christ, which is the Church – "The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you." (1 John 2:27.) This anointing began at Pentecost, and has continued upon all who are truly the Lord's, even to the present day.

And not only so, but every member of the body, however humble or obscure, being "anointed to preach," is failing in his mission if he does not preach. Indeed, if he be filled with the spirit he must preach, being impelled to that service by a burning zeal, like him who said, "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up;" "It is my meat and drink to do thy will, O God." But preaching is not always public declaration. Every influence that we can send out from within the radius of our talents, be they one or many, or be they humble or brilliant, is preaching the gospel. Let us all, therefore, diligently apply ourselves to it, and let it be "in the power of the spirit."

It is very significant that our Lord in quoting this commission, quoted only so much of it as was to be fulfilled by himself, the last phrase being, "to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord," – the Gospel age, the time wherein the presenting of our bodies as living sacrifices would be acceptable to God. With this he closed the book and sat down, and said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Had he read the remainder of it he could not have claimed its fulfilment that day; for it was not yet time to preach the day of vengeance, nor yet to begin the great Millennial work foreshown in verse 3. The proclaiming of the day of vengeance belongs specially to this end of the age, and the whole commission applies to the Church entire. The

message concerning day of vengeance is now due, and consequently is now being proclaimed by the "feet" members of the Christ.
