

## **"THEY GO FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH"**

**"Be ye filled with the Spirit." – Ephesians 5:18.**

LET us consider together briefly these words of the Apostle Paul, addressed to the Church of Christ, the saints. They do not apply to those who are merely empty professors, having a form of godliness only, but to those who have fully accepted the terms of God's Call, who have made the full consecration which alone brings us into the position of sons of God. These are the only ones who have the Spirit of God. These only are begotten from Above. But St. Paul would have us remember that it is not sufficient that we receive the begetting of the Holy Spirit, which comes to us at the very entrance of the narrow way. We should see that the Holy Spirit of God abounds in us more and more as we go on in our Heavenward course. The little spark of the new mind should grow stronger and brighter day by day.

If this development does not take place, if we merely stand still, we shall soon begin to lose ground; but if we progress, the natural man will gradually perish and the new man will thrive. Christian development should be steady and continuous. We are to be more and more filled with the Spirit. Sometimes the Lord's children say, "I do desire to be filled with the Lord's Spirit, but it seems as if my capacity is so small. I wish to have His Spirit in large measure, but I am unable to be what I long to be. I am not satisfied with my attainments." But if we are striving earnestly and prayerfully to become like Christ, let us not be discouraged. Let us remember that if we keep filled to our present capacity, this very infilling will enlarge our capacity. Then our earthen vessel will hold more of the Holy Spirit. This, in turn, still further enlarges our capacity; and so the expanding and filling goes on. Thus it is possible for us to be filled continually.

If it were an impossibility for us to be filled with the Spirit of God, the inspired Apostle would not have so instructed us. To the truly consecrated child of God this is possible, and not only possible, but obligatory. But as there are ebbs and flows in the ocean tides, so with our sense of the Lord's presence with us and His smile upon us. We may not always realize His presence to a large degree, but the Lord's saints must learn to walk by faith, to trust Him and His abiding love and presence with us even though physical ill health or untoward outward [R5912 : page 183] circumstances or conditions may at times cause a mental depression. We are to rejoice in the Lord even though there may be for a time more or less heaviness of spirit.

### **DAILY SELF-EXAMINATION NECESSARY**

In speaking of the glorious salvation of the Church the Apostle Peter says, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations [trials], that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." (1 Peter 1:6-8.) And we can thus rejoice even in the midst of severe trials that cause pain and tears. There may be times when it will seem as though we are more filled with the Spirit than at other times. But if we are striving earnestly to daily walk with God, this will not really be the case. It may be only a difference of surface feelings. The true child of the Lord should steadily progress.

The spirit, or disposition, of the world will seek to invade the dominion of the New Creature. But the New Creature must be on the alert to see that his mind and body are freed from everything that would not be in fullest harmony with God's Holy Spirit. Each one should seek to judge himself in this respect. We may not judge one another, but we should judge ourselves. We are to see to it that the

Spirit of the Lord is manifest in our words, our thoughts and our conduct. We should be able to do this more and more successfully, more and more continually, as we go on in the good way and grow in grace and knowledge. This we shall do if we are watching, praying, striving, day by day.

The Spirit of the Lord dwelling in us in fulness, as it should be, will cause our entire being to be so absorbed by the principles of righteousness laid down in the Lord's Word, to be so in love with the Heavenly things, Heavenly hopes, Heavenly prospects, that everything else will be of no value to us. And this will be more and more our blessed experience if we continue faithfully in the narrow way, if we "follow on to know the Lord."

But if, on the contrary, we find ourselves making provision for the flesh, making worldly plans; if we find ourselves inclined to lay up treasures on earth instead of in Heaven, we should take alarm, and should ask ourselves whether we are deficient, whether we are neglecting the means of grace – prayer alone with God, study of His Word, meditation upon the glorious things to which we have been called, watching ourselves as to our growth in the fruits of the Spirit. If we find that we are considerably controlled by the spirit of contention, we should ask ourselves, "Are we seeking to deal justly and equitably with others – to give them their rights and not to intrude upon them? Are we cultivating the love which is forbearing, forgiving and kind?" – 2 Timothy 2:24; Ephesians 4:31,32.

If we find after close introspection that we are in full sympathy with the spirit of love, and can see that we are gradually developing this crowning fruit of the Spirit, let us rejoice; for we should greatly deplore the matter if it were otherwise. If we find that we are controlled by this spirit of love, we may know that we are filled with the Spirit. This spirit of love will enlarge our hearts and minds, making us broader and nobler day by day.

But we need to continually watch and pray; for there is constant danger otherwise that we may be tripped up or stumbled either by our own faults or those of others. We are never safe from being side-tracked unless we go often to the Throne of Grace; we cannot be filled unless we keep very close to the great Fountain from which our infilling comes. We must daily carry our earthen pitcher to this Heavenly Fountain to be replenished; for we are leaky vessels. We are not to feel discouraged if we do not find in ourselves the rapid growth that we desire to see. Strong, sturdy trees that can withstand the fiercest storms are not developed in a day. Their growth is a slow, steady process. We should show our loyalty to the Lord by renewed effort every time we fail. He is looking at us not to see if we are perfect in the flesh – for He knows that we are not and can never be – but to see whether or not we have the spirit of earnestness and loyalty which daily and hourly seeks to keep the body under and to cheerfully take up the cross.

### **BLESSED RESULTS OF SPIRIT'S INFILLING**

The Christian is not to be like the worldling who seeks to drown his troubles and afflictions in drink or in pleasures, dissipations and frivolous diversions; but in every trouble he is to fly to the only true Source of solace and comfort and strength. This will drive away all anxiety and give him rest and peace even in the midst of trouble. Like the fabled halcyon, which built its nest and brought forth its birdlings in the midst of the sea, the true child of God can be at rest even amidst the billows and storms of life, and can prosper as a New Creature and accomplish all the good pleasure of God's will.

This unwavering trust in the Lord, this abiding rest of the soul, this zeal in God's service, is a matter of growth. "They go from strength to strength," the Psalmist declares of the inhabitants of Zion. "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear," said our Lord of this class. (Psalm 84:7; Mark 4:28.) Notwithstanding the difficulties of life, these can continue to make melody in their hearts

unto the Lord. They rejoice no [R5913 : page 183] matter what may be the outward earthly conditions. They can smile even through their tears, knowing that, according to His promise, all things are working together for their good. To attain this development is to be filled with the Spirit; and each consecrated disciple of Christ should reach this plane.

Some Christian writer has well said: "Wherever there has been a faithful following of the Lord in a consecrated heart, several things have, sooner or later, inevitably followed. Meekness and quietness of spirit become in time the characteristics of the daily life. A submissive acceptance of the will of God, as it comes in the hourly events of each day, is manifested; pliability in the hands of God to do or to suffer all the good pleasure of His will; sweetness under provocation; calmness in the midst of turmoil and bustle; a yielding to the wishes of others [where there is no conflicting principle involved], and an insensibility to slights and affronts; absence of worry or anxiety; deliverance from care and fear – all these, and many other similar graces, are invariably found to be the natural outward development of that inward life which is 'hid with Christ in God.'"

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"Jesus, my Lord, Thou art my life,  
My rest in labor, strength in strife;  
Thy love begets my love of Thee;  
Thy fulness that which filleth me.

"Mine effort vain, my weakness learned,  
Weary, from self to Christ I turned,  
Content to let His fulness be  
An unbought fulness unto me."

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