

# **The Spiritual Preparation of a Soul Winner**

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[Edited by William Allen]

## Chapter I

### **HOW TO PRAY EFFECTUALLY**

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself 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

There are two kinds of means requisite to promote a revival of religion; the one to influence men, the other to influence God. The truth is employed to influence men, and prayer to move God.

When I speak of moving God, I do not mean that God's mind is changed by prayer, or that His disposition or character is changed. But prayer produces such a change in us, as renders it consistent for God to do what is would not be consistent for Him to do otherwise.

When a sinner repents, that state of feeling makes it proper for God to forgive him. So when Christians, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, offer effectual prayer, their state of feeling render it proper for God to answer them. He was never unwilling to bestow the blessing on the condition that they felt right, and offered the right kind of prayer.

Prayer is an essential link in the chain of causes that lead to a revival; as much so as truth is. Some have zealously used truth to convert men, and laid very little stress on prayer. They have preached, and talked, and distributed tracts with great zeal, and then wondered that they had so little success. The reason was that they forgot to use the other branch of means--effectual prayer. They overlooked the fact, that

truth by itself, will never produce the necessary effect without the Spirit of God.

Sometimes it happens that those who are the most engaged in employing truth are not the most engaged in prayer. This is unfortunate, for unless they--or some others--have the spirit of prayer, the truth, by itself, will do nothing but harden men in impenitence. Probably in the day of judgment it will be found that nothing is ever done by the truth, used ever so zealously, unless there is a spirit of prayer somewhere in connection with the presentation of truth.

Others err on the other side. Not that they lay too much stress on prayer, but they overlook the fact that prayer might be offered forever, by itself, and nothing would be done. Because sinners are not converted by direct contact with the Holy Ghost, but by the truth, employed as a means. To expect the conversion of sinners by prayer alone, without the employment of truth, is to tempt God.

## **I. WHAT SPIRIT IS SPOKEN OF IN THE TEXT.**

Some have supposed that the Spirit spoken of in the text means our own spirit; our own mind. But a little attention to the text will show plainly that this is not the meaning. "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities" would then read: "Our own spirit helpeth the infirmities of our spirit," and "Our own spirit maketh intercession for our own spirit." You see you can make no sense of it on that supposition.

It is evident from the manner in which the text is introduced, that the Spirit referred to is the Holy Ghost. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Rom. 8:13-16. And the text is plainly speaking of the same Spirit.

## **II. WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT DOES.**

He intercedes for the saints. "He maketh intercession for us," and "helpeth our infirmities." When "we know not what to pray for as we ought," He helps us to pray "according to the will of God," or for the things that God desires us to pray for.

### **III. WHY IS THE HOLY SPIRIT THUS EMPLOYED?**

Because we know not what we should pray for as we ought. We are so ignorant both of the will of God revealed in the Bible, and of His unrevealed will which we ought to learn from His Providence. Mankind are vastly ignorant both of the promises and prophecies of the Bible, and blind to the Providence of God; and they are still more in the dark about those things of which God has said nothing but by the teachings of His Spirit. When all other means fail of leading us to the knowledge of what we ought to pray for, the Holy Spirit does it.

### **IV. HOW DOES HE MAKE INTERCESSION FOR THE SAINTS?**

1. Not by superseding the use of our faculties. It is not by praying for us, while we do nothing. He prays for us by exciting our own faculties. Not that He immediately suggests the words to pray, or guides our language; but He enlightens our minds, and makes the truth take hold of our souls. He leads us to consider the state of the Church and the condition of sinners around us.

The manner in which He brings the truth before the mind, and keeps it there until it produces its effect, we cannot tell. But we can know as much as this--that He leads us to a deep consideration of the state of things; and the natural result of this is deep feeling. When the Spirit brings the truth before a man's mind, there is only one way in which he can keep from feeling deeply, and that is by turning away his thoughts, and leading his mind to think of other things.

Sinners, when the Spirit of God brings the truth before them, must feel deeply. They feel wrong as long as they remain impenitent. So, if a man is a Christian, and the Holy Spirit brings these subjects into warm contact with his heart, it is just as impossible he should not feel deeply, as it is that your hand should not feel if you put it into the fire. If the Spirit of God leads a Christian to dwell on things calculated to excite

warm and overpowering feelings, and he if not affected by them, it proves that he has no love for souls, has nothing of the love of Christ, and knows nothing about Christian experience.

2. The Spirit makes Christians feel the value of souls, and the guilt and danger of sinners in their present condition. It is amazing how dark and stupid Christians often are about this. Even Christian parents let their children go right down to hell before their eyes, and scarcely seem to have a single feeling, or put forth an effort to save them. And why? Because they are so blind to what hell is, so unbelieving about the Bible, so ignorant of the precious promises which God has made to faithful parents. They grieve the Spirit of God away, and it is vain to make them pray for their children, while the Spirit of God is away from them.

3. He leads Christians to understand and apply the promises of the Bible. It is wonderful that in no age have Christians been able fully to apply the promises of Scriptures to the events of life, as they go along. This is not because the promises themselves are obscure. The promises are plain enough. But there has always been a disposition to overlook the Scriptures as a source of light respecting the passing events of life.

How astonished the Apostles were at Christ's application of so many prophecies of Himself! They seemed continually ready to exclaim, "Astonishing! Can it be so? We never understood it before." Who that has read the manner in which the Apostles, influenced and inspired by the Holy Ghost, applied passages of the Old Testament to New Testament times, has not been amazed at the richness of meaning which they found in the Scriptures? So it has been with many a Christian; while deeply engaged in prayer, he has seen that passages of Scriptures are appropriate which he never thought of before as having any such application.

I once knew an individual who was in great spiritual darkness. He had retired for prayer, resolving that he would not desist until he had got right with God. He kneeled down and tried to pray; but all was dark and he could not pray. He then arose from his knees and stood for a time; but he could not give up, for he had promised that he would not let the sun go down before he had given himself to God.

He knelt again; but all was dark, and his heart was as hard as before. He was nearly in despair, and said in agony, "I have grieved the Spirit of God away, and there is no promise for me. I am shut out of the presence of God." But his resolution was formed not to give up, and again he knelt down. He had said but a few words when this passage came into his mind, as fresh as if he had just read it, "Ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart." Jer. 29:13. He saw that though this promise was in the Old Testament, and addressed to the Jews, it was still as applicable to him as to them. It broke his heart like the hammer of the Lord, in a moment. Then he prayed freely and rose up happy in God.

Thus it often happens when professors of religion are praying for their children. Sometimes they pray, and are in darkness and doubt, feeling as if there were no foundation for faith, and no special promise for the children of believers. But while they have been pleading, God has shown them the full meaning of some promise, and their soul has rested on it as on the mighty arm of God.

I once heard of a widow who was greatly exercised about her children, until this passage was brought powerfully to her mind: "Thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in Me." Jer. 49:11. She saw it had an extended meaning, and she was enabled to lay hold on it; and then she prevailed in prayer, and her children were converted.

The Holy Spirit was sent into the world by the Saviour, to guide His people and instruct them, and bring things to their remembrance, as well as to convince the world of sin.

4. The Holy Spirit leads Christians to desire and pray for things of which nothing is specifically said in the Word of God. Take the case of an individual. That God is willing to save is a general truth. So it is a general truth that He is willing to answer prayer. But how shall I find the will of God respecting that individual, whether I can pray in faith according to the will of God for the conversion and salvation of that individual, or not?

Here the agency of the Holy Spirit comes in, to lead the minds of God's people to pray for those individuals, and at those times, when God is prepared to bless them. When we know not what to pray for, the Holy Spirit leads the mind to dwell on some object, to consider its situation,

to realize its value, and to feel for it, and to pray and travail in birth, until the person is converted. This sort of experience, I know, is less common in cities than it is in some parts of the country, because of the infinite number of things in cities to divert the attention, and grieve the Holy Spirit. I have had much opportunity to know how it has been in some places.

I was acquainted with an individual who used to keep a list of persons that he was especially concerned for; and I have had the opportunity to know a multitude of persons for whom he became thus interested, and who were immediately converted. I have seen him pray for persons on his list, when he was literally in an agony for them; and have sometimes known him call on some other person to help him pray in such a case. I have known his mind to fasten thus on an individual of hardened, abandoned character, and who could not be reached in any ordinary way.

In a town in a northern part of this state, where there was a revival, there was a certain individual who was a most violent and outrageous opposer. He kept a tavern, and used to delight in swearing at a desperate rate whenever there were Christians within hearing, on purpose to hurt their feelings. He was so bad, that one man said he believed that he would have to sell his place, or give it away, and move out of town, for he could not live near a man who swore so.

This good man that I was speaking of, was passing through the town one day, and heard of the case, and was very much grieved and distressed for the individual. He took him on his prayer list. The case weighed on his mind when he was asleep and when he was awake. He kept thinking about him and praying for him for days. And the first we knew of it, this ungodly man came into a meeting, and got up and confessed his sins, and poured out his soul to God. His bar-room immediately became the place where they held prayer meetings.

In this manner the Spirit of God leads individual Christians to pray for things which they would not pray for, unless they were led by Him. And thus they pray for things, "according to the will of God." If God leads a man to pray for an individual, the inference from the Bible is, that God designs to save that person. If we find by comparing our state of mind with the Bible, that we are led by the Spirit to pray for an individual, we have good evidence to believe that God is prepared to bless him.

5. By giving to Christians a spiritual discernment respecting the movements and developments of Providence. Devoted, praying Christians, often see these things so clearly, and look so far ahead, as greatly to stumble others. They sometimes almost seem to prophesy.

No doubt, persons may be deluded, and sometimes are, by leaning to their own understanding when they think they are led by the Spirit. But there is no doubt that a Christian may be made to see and discern clearly the signs of the times, so as to understand by providence, what to expect, and thus to pray for it in faith, when no one else can see the least sign of it. Thus they are often led to expect a revival, and pray for it in faith, and later events proved that they were truly led by the Spirit of God.

There was a woman in New Jersey, in a place where there had been a revival. She was very positive that there was going to be another. She insisted upon it that they had had the former rain and were now going to have the latter rain. She wanted to have special meetings appointed. But the minister and elders saw nothing to encourage it, and would do nothing. She saw that they were blind and so she went forward, and got a carpenter to make seats for her, for she said she would have meetings in her own house, for there was certainly going to be a revival.

She had scarcely opened her doors for meetings, before the Spirit of God came down in great power. Then those sleepy church members found themselves surrounded all at once with convicted sinners. And they could only say, "The Lord is in this place, and we knew it not."

The reason why such persons understand the indications of Providence, is not because of the superior wisdom that is in them, but because the Spirit of God leads them to see the signs of the times. And this, not by revelation, but they are led to see that converging of providences to a single point, which produces in them a confident expectation of a certain result.

## **V. TO WHAT DEGREE MAY WE EXPECT THE SPIRIT OF GOD TO INFLUENCE THE MINDS OF CHRISTIANS?**

The text says, "The Spirit maketh intercession with groanings that cannot be uttered." The meaning of this I understand to be, that the

Spirit excites desires too great to be expressed except by groans. Something that language cannot utter--making the soul too full to utter its feelings by words, where the person can only groan them out to God, who understands the language of the heart.

## **VI. HOW WE CAN KNOW THE SPIRIT'S INFLUENCES.**

1. Not by feeling that some external influence or agency is applied to us. We are not to expect to feel our minds in direct physical contact with God. If such a thing can be, we know of no way in which it can be made sensible. We know that we exercise our minds freely, and that our thoughts are exercised on something that excites our feelings. But we are not to expect a miracle to be wrought, as if we were led by the hand, sensibly, or like something whispered in our ear, or any miraculous manifestation of the will of God.

Christians often grieve the Spirit away, because they do not honour Him and cherish His influences. Sinners often do this ignorantly. They suppose that if they were under conviction of sin by the Spirit, they would have such and such a mysterious feeling; that a shock would come upon them which they could not mistake. Many Christians are so ignorant of the Spirit's influences and have thought so little about having His assistance in prayer, that when they have His influences they do not know it, and so do not cherish and yield to them, and preserve them.

We are sensible of nothing, when we pray in the Spirit, only the movement of our own minds. There is nothing else that can be felt. We are merely sensible that our thoughts are intensely employed on a certain subject.

Christians are often unnecessarily misled and distressed on this point, for fear they have not the Spirit of God. They feel intensely, but they do not know what makes them feel so. They are distressed about sinners; but should they not be distressed, when they think of their condition? They keep thinking about them all the time, and how can they avoid being distressed?

Now, the truth is, the very fact that you are thinking upon them is evidence that the Spirit of God is influencing you. Do you know that the greater part of the time these things do not affect you so? The greater

part of the time you do not think much about the case of sinners. You know their salvation is always equally important. But at other times, even when you are quite at leisure, your mind is entirely dark, and vacant of any feeling for them.

But now, although you may be busy about other things, you think, you pray, and feel intensely for them, even while you are about business that at other times would occupy all your thoughts. Now almost every thought you have is, "God have mercy upon them." Why is this? Why, their case is placed in such a strong light before your mind. Do you ask what it is that leads your mind to exercise these benevolent feelings for sinners, and to agonize in prayer for them? It is the Spirit of God. There are no devils that would lead you so. If your feelings are truly benevolent, you are to consider it as the Holy Spirit leading you to pray for things according to the will of God.

2. Try the spirits by the Bible. People are sometimes led away by strange fantasies and crazy impulses. If you compare them faithfully with the Bible, you need never be led astray. You can always know whether your feelings are produced by the Spirit's influences, by comparing your desires with the spirit and temper of the Bible. The Bible commands you to try the spirits whether they be of God.

## **VII. HOW TO OBTAIN THE INFLUENCES OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD.**

1. They must be sought by fervent believing prayer. Jesus said, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" Luke 11:13. Does any one say, "I have prayed for His influences, and they do not come"? It is because you do not pray aright. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." James 4:3. You do not pray from right motives.

A professor of religion, and a principal member in a church, once asked a minister what he thought of his case; he had been praying week after week for the Holy Spirit, and had not found any benefit. The minister asked what his motive was in praying. He said he wanted to be happy, as he knew those who had the Spirit were happy. The minister showed him that the devil himself might pray so. That it was mere selfishness. The man turned away in anger. He saw that he had never known what

it was to pray. He was convinced that he was a hypocrite, and that his prayers were all selfish, dictated only by a desire for his own happiness.

David prayed that God would uphold him by His free Spirit, that he might teach transgressors, and turn sinners to God. A Christian should pray for the Holy Spirit, that he may be more useful and glorify God more; not that he himself may be more happy. This man saw clearly where he had been in error, and he was converted. You ought to examine and see if your prayers are not tainted with selfishness.

2. Use the means adapted to stir up your minds on this subject, and to keep your attention fixed there. If a man prays for the Holy Spirit and then diverts his mind to other objects, he tempts God; he swings loose from his object, and it would be a miracle if he should get what he prays for.

How is a sinner convicted? Why, by thinking of his sins. That is the way for a Christian to obtain deep feeling; by thinking on the appropriate object. God is not going to pour these things on you, without any effort on your own. You must cherish the slightest impressions.

Take the Bible, and go over the passages that show the condition and prospects of the world. Look at the world, look at your children, and your neighbours, and see their condition while they remain in sin, and persevere in prayer and effort until you obtain the blessing of the Spirit of God to dwell in you. This was the way, doubtless, that Dr. Watts came to have the feelings which he described in the words of the hymn: --

My thoughts on awful subjects dwell,

Damnation and the dead;

What horrors seize the guilty soul

Upon a dying bed!

Look, at it were, through a telescope that will bring these objects up near to you; look into hell, and hear them groan; then turn the glass

upward and look into heaven, and see the saints there, in their white robes, with their harps in their hands, and hear them singing the song of redeeming love; and ask yourself--Is it possible, that I should prevail with God to elevate the sinner there? Do this, and if you are not a wicked man, and a stranger to God, you will soon have as much of the spirit of prayer as your body can sustain.

3. You must watch unto prayer. You must keep a look out, and see if God grants the blessing when you ask Him. People sometimes pray and never look to see if the prayer is answered. Be careful also, not to grieve the Spirit of God. Confess and forsake your sins. God will never lead you as one of His chosen ones, and let you into His secrets, unless you confess and forsake your sins. Do not be always confessing and never forsaking your sins; but confess and forsake too. Make redress wherever you have committed an injury. You cannot expect to get the spirit of prayer first, and then see to these matters after. You cannot fight in through so. Professors of religion, who are proud and unyielding, and who justify themselves, will never force God to dwell with them. They must yield to God's terms.

4. Aim to obey perfectly the law of God. In others words, have no fellowship with sin. Aim at living entirely above the world; "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Matt. 5:48. If you ever sin at all, let it be your daily grief. The man who does not aim at this, means to live in sin. Such a man need not expect God's blessing, for he is not sincere in desiring to keep all His commandments.

5. Pray in the name of Jesus. You cannot come to God in your own name. You cannot plead your own merits. But you can come in a Name that is always acceptable. You know what it is to use the name of a man. If you should go to the bank with a draft or note, endorsed by a millionaire, that would be giving you his name, and you know you could get the money from the bank just as well as he could himself. Now, Jesus gives you the use of His name, and when you pray in the name of Jesus the meaning of it is, that you can prevail just as well as He could Himself, if He were to pray for the same things.

## **VIII. FOR WHOM DOES THE SPIRIT INTERCEDE?**

"He maketh intercession for the saints," for all saints, for any who are saints.

## REMARKS

Why is it that so little stress is laid on the influences of the Holy Spirit in prayer? Many lay great stress on the Spirit's influence in converting sinners. But how little is said, how little is printed, about His influences in prayer! How little complaining that people do not make enough of the Spirit's influences in leading Christians to pray according to the will of God!

Let it never be forgotten that no Christian ever prays aright, unless he is led by the Spirit. He has natural power to pray, and so far as the will of God is revealed, he is able to do it; but he never does so effectually, unless the Spirit of God influences him. Just as sinners are able to repent, but never do, unless influenced by the Spirit.

This subject lays open the foundation of the difficulty felt by many persons on the subject of the Prayer of Faith. They object to the idea that faith in prayer is a belief that we shall receive the very thing for which we ask; and insist that there can be no foundation or evidence upon which to rest such a belief. In a sermon published a few years ago on this subject, the writer brings forward this difficulty.

"I have," says he, "no evidence that the thing prayed for will be granted, until I have prayed in faith; because, praying in faith is the condition upon which it is promised. And, of course, I cannot claim the promise until I have fulfilled the condition.

Now, if the condition is, that I am to believe I shall receive the very blessing for which I ask, it is evident that the promise is given upon the performance of an impossible condition, and is of course, a mere nullity. The promise would amount to just this: You shall have whatsoever you ask, upon the condition that you first believe that you shall receive it. Now, I must fulfill the condition before I can claim the promise. But I can have no evidence that I shall receive it, until I believed that I shall receive it. This reduces me to the necessity of believing that I shall receive it, before I have any evidence that I shall receive it--which is impossible."

The whole force of this objection arises out of the fact, that the Spirit's influences are entirely overlooked, which He exerts in leading an individual to the exercise of faith; and that faith which is produced only by the operation of God, is also left out of the question. The fact is, that the Spirit of God can give evidence, on which to believe that any particular blessing will be granted. He can lead the mind to a firm reliance upon God, and trust that the blessings sought will be obtained.

The influences of the Holy Spirit are not miraculous. Praying is the same thing whether you pray for the conversion of a soul, or for a miracle. Faith is the same thing in the one case as in the other; it only terminates on a different object; in the one case on the conversion of a soul, and in the other on the performance of a miracle.

Nor is faith exercised in the one more than in the other, without reference to a promise. A general promise may with the same propriety, be applied to the conversion of a soul, as to the performance of a miracle. And it is equally true in the one case as in the other, that no man ever prays in faith without being influenced by the Spirit of God. If the Spirit could lead the mind of an apostle to exercise faith in regard to a miracle, He can lead the mind of a Christian to exercise faith in regard to receiving any other blessing, by a reference to the same general promise.

Should anyone ask, "When are we under obligation to believe that we shall receive the blessing for which we ask?" I answer: --

(a) When there is a particular promise specifying the particular blessing: as when we pray for the Holy Spirit. He is particularly named in the promise, Luke 11:13, and here we have evidence and are bound to believe, whether we have any Divine influence or not: just as sinners are bound to repent whether the Spirit strives with them or not. Their obligation rests not upon the Spirit's influences, but upon their ability to do their duty. And while it is true that not one of them ever will repent without the influences of the Spirit, still they have the power to do so, and are under obligation to do so, whether the Spirit strives with them or not. So with the Christian, he is bound to believe where he has evidence. And although he never does believe, even where he has an express promise, without the aid of the Spirit of God, yet this obligation to do so rests upon his ability, and not upon the Divine influence.

(b) Where God makes a revelation by His Providence, we are bound to believe in proportion to the clearness of the providential indication.

(c) Where there is a prophecy, we are also bound to believe. But in neither of these cases do we, in fact, believe, without the Spirit of God.

But where there is neither promise, providence, nor prophecy, on which we can repose our faith, we are under no obligation to believe, unless, as I have shown in this discourse, the Spirit gives us evidence, by creating desires, and by leading us to pray for a particular object.

In the case of those promises of a general nature, where we are honestly at a loss to know in what particular cases to apply them, it may be considered rather as our privilege than as our duty, in many instances, to apply them to particular cases; but whenever the Spirit of God leads us to apply them to a particular object, then it becomes our duty to apply them. In this case, God explains His own promise, and shows how He designed it should be applied. Then our obligation to make this application, and to believe in reference to this particular object, remains in full force.

Some have supposed that Paul prayed in faith for the removal of the "thorn in the flesh," and that it was not granted. But they cannot prove that Paul prayed in faith. He had neither promise, nor prophecy, nor providence, nor the Spirit of God, to lead him to believe. The Spirit of God would not lead him to pray for that which was not according to the will of God.

I have dwelt the more upon this subject, because I want to have it made so plain, that you will all be careful not to grieve the Holy Spirit. I want you to have high ideas of Him, and to feel that no good will be done without His influences. That no praying or preaching will be of any avail without Him. Even if Jesus were to come down here and preach to sinners, not one would be converted without the influences of the Holy Spirit. Be careful then not to grieve Him away, by slighting or neglecting His heavenly influences when He invites you to pray.

In praying for an object, it is necessary to persevere until you obtain it. Oh, with what eagerness Christians sometimes pursue a sinner in their prayers, when the Spirit of God has fixed their desires upon him! No miser pursues his gold with so fixed a determination.

The fear of being led by influences and impulses has done great injury, because it has not been duly considered. A person's mind may be led by an evil influence; but we do wrong, if we let the fear of impulses lead us to resist the good impulses of the Holy Ghost. No wonder Christians have not the spirit of prayer if they are unwilling to take the trouble to distinguish between the holy influences of the Spirit of God, and selfish or evil impulses.

A great deal has been said about fanaticism that is very unguarded, and that has caused many minds to reject the leadings of the Spirit of God. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Rom. 8:14. And it is our duty to "try the spirits whether they are of God." 1 John 4:1. We should insist on a close scrutiny, and an accurate discrimination. There must be such a thing as being led by the Holy Spirit. And when we are convinced that we are being led of God, we should be sure to follow with full confidence that He will not lead us wrong.

We see from this subject the absurdity of using forms of prayer. The very idea of using a form rejects, of course, the leadings of the Spirit. Nothing is more calculated to destroy the spirit of prayer, and entirely to darken and confuse the mind, as to what constitutes prayer, than to use set forms. Forms of prayer are not only absurd in themselves, but they are the very devise of the devil to destroy the spirit and break the power of prayer.

It is of no use to say the form is a good one. Prayer does not consist in words; and it matters not what the words are, if the heart is not led by the Spirit of God. If the desire is not kindled, the thoughts directed, and the whole current of feeling produced and led by the Spirit of God, it is not prayer. And set forms are, of all things, best calculated to keep an individual from praying as he ought.

This subject furnishes a test of character. The Spirit maketh intercession for whom? For the saints. Those who are saints are thus exercised. If you are saints you know by experience what it is to be thus exercised, or if not it is because you have grieved the Spirit of God, so that He will not lead you. You live in such a manner that this Holy Comforter will not dwell with you, nor give you the spirit of prayer.

If this is so, you must repent. Whether you are a Christian or not, do not stop to settle that, but repent, as if you never had repented. Do

your first works. Do not take it for granted that you are a Christian, but go, like a humble sinner, and pour out your heart unto the Lord. You can never have the spirit of prayer in any other way.

It is important to understand the subject of prayer:

(a) In order to be useful. Without the spirit of prayer there can be no such sympathy between you and God, that you can either walk with God or work with God. You need to have a strong beating of your heart with His, or you cannot expect to be greatly useful.

(b) As important to your sanctification. Without such a spirit you will not be sanctified, you will not understand the Bible, you will not know how to apply it in your case. I want you to feel the importance of having God with you all the time. If you live as you ought, He says He will come unto you, and make His abode with you, and sup with you, and you with Him.

If people know not the spirit of prayer, they are very apt to be unbelieving in regard to the results of prayer. They do not see what takes place, or do not see the connection, or do not see the evidence. They are not expecting spiritual blessings. When sinners are convicted, they think they are only frightened by such terrible preaching. And when people are converted, they feel no confidence, and only say, "We will see how they turn out."

Those who have the spirit of prayer know when the blessing comes. It was just so when Christ appeared. Those ungodly doctors of the law did not know Him. Why? Because they were not praying for the redemption of Israel. But Simeon and Anna knew Him. How was that? Mark what they said, how they prayed, and how they lived. They were praying in faith, and so they were not surprised when He came. So it is with such Christians. If sinners are convicted and converted, they are not surprised at it. They are expecting just such things. They know God when He comes, because they are looking out for His visits.

There are three classes of persons in the Church who are liable to error, or have left the truth out of view, on the subject.

(a) Those who place great reliance on prayer in seeking to promote a revival, and use no other means. They are alarmed at any special

means of spreading the Gospel, and talk about your "getting up a revival."

(b) Over against these there are those who use means, and pray, but never think about the influences of the Spirit in prayer. They talk about prayer for the Spirit, and feel the importance of the influences of the Spirit in the conversion of sinners, but do not realize the importance of the Spirit in prayer. Their prayers are all cold talk, nothing that anybody can feel, or that can take hold of God.

(c) Those who have certain strange notions about the sovereignty of God, and who are waiting for God to convert the world without prayer or the preaching of the Gospel.

There must be in the Church a deeper sense of the need of the spirit of prayer. The fact is, that, generally, those who use means most assiduously, and make the most strenuous efforts for the salvation of men, and who have the most correct notions of the manner in which means should be used for converting sinners, also pray most for the Spirit of God and wrestle most with God for His blessing. And what is the result? Let facts speak, and say whether these persons do or do not pray, and whether the Spirit of God does not testify to their prayers, and follow their labours with His power.

A spirit very different from the spirit of prayer appears to prevail in the majority of the churches. Nothing will produce an excitement and opposition so quickly as the spirit of prayer. If any person should feel burdened with the case of sinners, in prayer, so as to groan in his prayer, why, the women are nervous, and he is visited at once with rebuke and opposition.

From my soul I abhor all affectation of feeling where there is none, and all attempts to work one's self up into feeling by groans. But I feel bound to defend the position, that there is such a thing as being in a state of mind in which there is but one way to keep from groaning, and that is by resisting the Holy Ghost.

I was once present when this subject was discussed. It was said that groaning ought to be discountenanced. The question was asked whether God could produce such a state of feeling in a Christian, that to abstain from groaning would be impossible. And the answer was, "Yes, but He never does." If that be true the Apostle Paul was greatly

deceived when he wrote about groanings that cannot be uttered: Jonathan Edwards was deceived when he wrote his book on revivals, and revivals are all in the dark.

Now, no man who reviews the history of the Church will adopt such a sentiment. I do not like this attempt to shut out, or stifle, or keep down, or limit, the spirit of prayer. I would sooner cut off my right hand than rebuke the spirit of prayer, as I have heard of its being done by saying, "Don't let me hear any more groaning."

I should like to discuss this subject for a month, until the whole Church could understand it, so as to pray the prayer of faith. Beloved, I want to ask you, will you give yourselves up to prayer and live so as to have the spirit of prayer, and have the Holy Spirit with you all the time? Oh, for a praying church!

I once knew a minister who had a revival fourteen winters in succession. I did not know how to account for it, until I saw one of his church members get up in a prayer meeting and make a confession. "Brethren," said he, "I have been long in the habit of praying every Saturday night until after midnight, for the descent of the Holy Ghost among us. And now, brethren," and he began to weep, "I confess that I have neglected for two or three weeks." The secret was out: that minister had a praying church.

Brethren, in my present state of health, I find it impossible to pray as much as I have been in the habit of doing, and at the same time continue to preach. It overcomes my strength. Now, shall I give myself up to pray and stop preaching? That will not do. Now, will not you, who are in health, throw yourselves into this work, and bear this burden, and lay yourselves out in prayer, until God will pour out His blessing upon us?

## **Chapter II**

# **POWER FROM ON HIGH**

## **I. WHAT IS IT**

The apostles and brethren on the Day of Pentecost received a powerful baptism of the Holy Ghost, a vast increase of divine

illumination. This baptism imparted a great diversity of gifts that were used for the accomplishment of their work. It included the following things. The power of a holy life. The power of a self-sacrificing life. The power of a cross-bearing life. The power of great meekness. The power of a loving enthusiasm in proclaiming the Gospel. The power of teaching. The power of a loving and living faith. The gift of tongues. An increasing of power to work miracles. The gift of inspiration, or the revelation of many truths before unrecognized by them. The power of moral courage to proclaim the Gospel and do the bidding of Christ, whatever it cost them.

In their circumstances all these enduements were essential to their success; but neither separately nor all together did they constitute that power from on high which Christ promised, and which they manifestly received. That which they manifestly received as the supreme, crowning, and all important means of success, was the power to prevail with both God and man, the power to fasten SAVING IMPRESSIONS upon the minds of men.

This last was doubtless the thing which they understood Christ to promise. He had commissioned the Church to evangelize the world. All that I have named above were only means, which could never secure the end, unless they were vitalized and made effectual by the power of God.

The apostles, doubtless, understood this; and, laying themselves and their all upon the altar, they besieged the Throne of Grace in the spirit of entire consecration of their work.

They did in fact receive the gifts above mentioned; but supremely and principally this power to savingly impress men. It was manifested upon the spot. They began to address the multitude; and wonderful to tell, three thousand were converted the same hour. But, observe, there was no new power manifested by them upon this occasion, save the gifts of tongues. They wrought no miracle at that time, and used these tongues simply as the means of making themselves understood.

Let it be noted that they had not had time to exhibit any other gifts of the Spirit which have been above named. They had not at that time the advantage of exhibiting a holy life, or any of the powerful graces and gifts of the Spirit. What was said on the occasion, as recorded in the book of Acts, could not have made the impression that it did, had it not

been uttered by them with a new power to make a saving impression upon the people.

This power was not the power of inspiration, for they only declared certain facts of their own knowledge. It was not the power of human learning and culture, for they had but little. It was not the power of human eloquence, for there appears to have been but little of it. It was God speaking in and through them. It was a power from on high--God in them making a saving impression upon those to whom they spoke.

This power to savingly impress, abode with and upon them. It was, doubtless, the great and main thing promised by Christ, and received by the apostles and early Christians. It has existed to a greater or less extent, in the Church ever since. It is a mysterious fact, often manifested in a most surprising manner. Sometimes a single sentence, a word, a gesture, or even a look, will convey this power in an overcoming manner.

To the honour of God alone I will relate a little of my own experience in this matter. I was powerfully converted on the morning of the 10th of October, 1821. In the evening of the same day, and on the morning of the following day, I received overwhelming baptisms of the Holy Ghost, that went through me, as it seemed to me, body and soul. I immediately found myself endued with such power from on high that a few words dropped here and there to individuals, were the means of their immediate conversion. My words seemed to fasten like barbed arrows in the souls of men. They cut like a sword. They broke the heart like a hammer. Multitudes can attest to this.

Sometimes I would find myself, in a great measure, empty of this power. I would go out and visit, and find that I had made no saving impression. I would exhort and pray with the same result. I would then set apart a day for private fasting and prayer, fearing that this power had departed from me, and would enquire anxiously after the reason of this apparent emptiness. After humbling myself, and crying out for help, the power would return upon me with all its freshness. This has been the experience of my life.

I could fill a volume with the history of my own experience and observation with respect to this power from on high. It is a fact of consciousness and observation, but a great mystery. I have said that

sometimes a look has in it the power of God. I have often witnessed this.

I once preached for the first time in a manufacturing village. The next morning I went into a manufacturing establishment to view its operations. As I passed into the weaving department I beheld a great company of young women, some of whom, I observed were looking at me, and then at each other, in a manner that indicated a trifling spirit, and that they knew me. I, however, knew none of them. As I approached nearer to those who had recognized me they seemed to increase in their manifestations of lightness of mind.

Their levity made a peculiar impression upon me; I felt it to my very heart. I stopped short and looked at them, I know not how, as my whole mind was absorbed with the sense of their guilt and danger. As I settled my countenance upon them I observed that one of them became very agitated. A thread broke. She attempted to mend it; but her hands trembled in such a manner that she could not do it. I immediately observed that the sensation was spreading, and had become universal among that class of triflers. I looked steadily at them until one after another gave up and paid no more attention to their looms. They fell on their knees, and the influence spread through the whole room. I had not spoken a word; and the noise of the looms would have prevented my being heard if I had. In a few minutes all work was abandoned, and tears and lamentations filled the room.

At this moment the owner of the factory, who was himself an unconverted man, came in, accompanied, I believe, by the superintendent, who was a professed Christian. When the owner saw the state of things he said to the superintendent, "Stop the mill." What he saw seemed to pierce him to the heart. "It is more important," he hurriedly remarked, "that these souls should be saved, than that this mill should run."

As soon as the noise of the machinery had ceased, we had a marvelous meeting. I prayed with them, and gave them such instructions as at the time they could bear. The Word was with power. Many expressed hope that day; and within a few days as I was informed, nearly every hand in that great establishment, together with the owner, had hope in Christ.

This power is a great marvel. I have many times seen people unable to endure the Word. The most simple and ordinary statements would cut men off from their seats like a sword, would take away their bodily strength, and render them almost as helpless as dead men. Several times it has been true in my experience that I could not raise my voice, or say anything in prayer or exhortation except in the mildest manner, without wholly overcoming those who were present. This was not because I was preaching terror to the people; the sweetest sound of the Gospel would overcome them.

This power seems to pervade the atmosphere of one who is highly charged with it. Many times great numbers of persons in a community will be clothed with this power, when the very atmosphere of the whole place seems to be charged with the life of God. Strangers coming into it, and passing through the place, will be instantly struck with conviction of sin, and in many instances converted to Christ.

When Christians humble themselves, and consecrate their all afresh to Christ, and ask for this power, they will often receive such a baptism that they will be instrumental in converting more souls in one day, than in all their lifetime before. While Christians remain humble enough to retain this power, the work of conversion will go on, until whole communities and regions of country are converted to Christ.

## **II. THE CONDITIONS OF RECEIVING THIS POWER**

Let us borrow a little light from the Scriptures. Before Pentecost the disciples had already been converted to Christ. But conversion to Christ is not to be confounded with consecration to the great work of the world's conversion. When Christ had dispelled their great bewilderment resulting from His crucifixion, and confirmed their faith by repeated interviews with them, He gave them their great commission to win all nations to Himself. But He admonished them to tarry at Jerusalem till they were endued with power from on high, which He said they should receive not many days hence.

Now observe what they did. They assembled, the men and women, for prayer. They accepted the commission, and doubtless, came to an understanding of the nature of the commission, and the necessity of the spiritual enduement which Christ had promised. They must have renounced utterly the idea of living to themselves in any form, and

devoted themselves with all their powers to the work set before them. This consecration of themselves to the work, this self-renunciation, this dying to all that the world could offer them, must, in the order of nature, have preceded their intelligent seeking of the promised enduement of power from on high.

How did they wait? Not in listlessness and inactivity; not in making preparation by study and otherwise to get along without it. They understood that it was to be a baptism of the Holy Ghost. They prayed in faith. They held on until the enduement came.

We, as Christians, have the same commission to fulfill. We have the same promise that they had. They were Christians and had a measure of the Spirit to lead them in prayer and consecration. So have we. Let us, then, not grieve or resist Him; but accept the commission, fully consecrate ourselves, with all we have, to the saving of souls as our great and only life-work. Let us get on the altar with all we have and are, and persist in prayer until we receive the enduement of power.

It is of the utmost importance that all Christians should understand that this commission to convert the world is given to them by Christ individually. Every one has the great responsibility devolved upon him or her, to win as many souls as possible for Christ. There are a great many departments in this work, but in every department we may or ought to possess this power, that, whether we preach, or pray, or write, or print, or travel, take care of children, or administer the government of the state, or whatever we do, our whole life and influence should be permeated with this power. Jesus said, "He that believeth on Me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

The reception of this enduement of power is instantaneous. I do not mean to assert that in every instance the recipient was aware of the precise time at which the power commenced to work mightily within him. It may have commenced like the dew and increased to a shower.

## **REMARKS**

The want of an enduement of power from on high should be deemed a disqualification for a pastor, a deacon or elder, a Sunday School superintendent, a professor in a Christian College, and especially for a professor in a theological seminary. The churches should inform

themselves, and look to those seminaries which furnish, not merely the best educated, but the most unctuous and spiritually powerful ministers.

From the time of the apostles to the present day it has been seen that men of very little human culture, but endued with this power, have been highly successful in winning souls to Christ; whilst men of the greatest learning, with all that the schools have done for them, have been powerless so far as the proper work of the ministry is concerned.

### Chapter III

## THE HOLY SPIRIT'S TEACHING

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. John 16:13

The doctrine of the necessity of Divine teaching, to enlighten and sanctify the minds of men, is abundantly taught in the Bible, and is generally maintained, as a matter of opinion at least, in all orthodox churches.

In discoursing on this subject I will show:

### **I. HOW FAR THE REASON OF MAN, UNAIDED BY DIVINE ILLUMINATION, IS CAPABLE OF APPREHENDING SPIRITUAL THINGS.**

1. The mind of man is capable of understanding the historical facts of religion, just as it comprehends any other historical facts.
2. The mind of man is capable of understanding the doctrinal propositions of the Gospel; such as the being and character of God, the divine authority and inspiration of the Scriptures, and other fundamental doctrines.

For instance, to enter a little into detail a man by his reason may understand the law of God. He can understand that it requires him to exercise perfect love towards God and all other things.

So likewise, he can see that he is a sinner, and that he cannot be saved by his own works. He has broken God's law, so that the law can never justify him. He can see that if he is ever saved, it will be through mere mercy, by an act of pardon.

## **II. I WILL SHOW WHEREIN OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE THINGS OF RELIGION IS NECESSARILY DEFECTIVE, WITHOUT THE TEACHING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

Knowledge, to avail anything towards effecting its object, must be such as will influence the mind. The will must be controlled. And to do this, the mind must have such a view of things to excite emotion, corresponding to the object in view. Mere intellectual knowledge will never move the soul to act.

In the case of sinners: to influence sinners to love God, they must have a degree of light such as will powerfully excite the mind, and produce strong emotions. The reason for obedience must be made to appear with great strength and vividness to their minds, so as to subdue their rebellious hearts and bring them voluntarily to obey God. This is effectual knowledge of the Gospel. This men never have, and never can have, without the aid of the Spirit of God. If men were disposed to do right, I know not how far their knowledge, attainable by unaided reason, might avail. But, as they are universally and totally indisposed to obey God, this knowledge will never do it. I will mention some of the reasons:

1. All the knowledge we can have of spiritual things, is by analogy or comparison. Our minds are here shut up in the body, and we derive all our ideas from external objects, through the senses.

It is easily seen that all the ideas concerning spiritual things, conveyed to our minds in this way, must be extremely imperfect, and that we do not, after all, get the true idea in our minds. The Jewish types were probably the most forcible means which God could then use, for giving to the Jews a correct idea of the Gospel.

Yet, it is manifest that the ideas that were communicated in this way were extremely imperfect; and that, without divine illumination to make them see the reality more fully than they could by unaided reason, they never would have got any effectual knowledge of the plan of redemption in this way.

So, when we find in the Bible descriptions of heaven and hell, or anything in the invisible world, it is plain that from words we can get no true ideas at all adequate to the reality.

2. The wickedness of our hearts is so great, as to pervert our judgment, and shut out from our minds much that we might understand of the things of religion.

3. Prejudice is a great obstacle to the reception of correct knowledge concerning religion. The general truth is this: without divine illumination men can understand from the Bible enough to convict and condemn them, but not enough to sanctify and save them.

### **III. THE SPIRIT OF GOD ALONE CAN GIVE US THIS ILLUMINATION.**

Jesus told His apostles, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if it go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you." The word here translated Comforter, properly means a helper or teacher. "When He is come He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; of judgment because the prince of this world is judged."

Again He said, "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. Here you see the office of the Spirit of God is to instruct mankind in regard to the things of religion.

THE MANNER in which the Spirit of God does this, is what we can never know in this world. But the fact is undeniable, that He can reach the mind without the use of words, and can put our minds in possession of the ideas themselves, of which the types, or figures, or words of the human teacher, are only the signs or imperfect representatives.

What Christian does not know this, as a matter of fact? What Christian does not know, from his own experience, that the Spirit of God does lead him instantly to see something in a passage of Scripture, which all his study, and effort of mind to know the meaning of, could never have given him.

#### **IV. DIVINE TEACHING MAY BE HAD BY ALL MEN FREELY UNDER THE GOSPEL.**

Jesus said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" Luke 11:9, 13. "All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Matt. 21:22

#### **V. I WILL SHOW THE REASONS WHY SOME DO NOT HAVE AS MUCH DIVINE ILLUMINATION AS THEY NEED.**

1. They do not ask for it in such a manner or degree as they need it.
2. They ask amiss, or from selfish motives. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." James 4:3
3. They do not use the proper means to attain what they ask. Suppose a person neglects his Bible, and yet asks God to give him a deep knowledge of the things of religion: that is tempting God.
4. Another reason is, that they **DEPEND** on the instructions and means, as if they were effectual without divine influence. How many rely on the instructions they receive from ministers, or commentaries, or books, or their own powers of enquiry, not recognizing that all these things, without the Spirit of God, will only kill, but can never make alive: can only damn, but can never save.

#### **REMARKS**

They are blind leaders of the blind, who attempt to teach the things of religion to others, without being themselves taught of God.

This is applicable both to preachers and to teachers in Sabbath Schools and Bible classes. If any of them attempt to teach the Scriptures without being themselves taught of God, they are no more fit to teach than the most ignorant person in the streets is fit to teach astronomy.

I fear that both ministers and teachers generally, have understood very little of their NEED of this divine teaching, and have felt very little the necessity of praying over their sermons and Bible lessons, until they feel confident that the Spirit of God has possessed their minds with the true idea of the particular portion of the Word of God. If this were done as it ought to be, their instructions would be far more effectual than we now see them.

Our Saviour prayed, "Sanctify them through Thy truth." John 17:17. This grand means of sanctification must be more richly enjoyed before the Church will know what entire sanctification means. They do not understand the Bible, and the reason is: **THEY HAVE NOT GONE TO THE AUTHOR** or His explanation of it. Although they may have this blessed privilege every day, of carrying the book to the Author for His explanation; yet how little do church members know of the Bible, which they are conscious they have been taught to know by the Holy Ghost!

Will you do this? Will you lay your hearts open to God, and not give Him rest, until He has filled you with divine knowledge? Will you search the Scriptures? I have often been asked by young converts, and young men preparing for the ministry, what they should read: **READ THE BIBLE!** I would give the same answer five hundred times. Over and above all other things, study the Bible.