

The Fullness of the Holy Spirit for Life and Work - 6

The Spirit is given to the obedient

Bibliography:

Campbell, John McLeod, [1856] *The Nature of the Atonement*, Handsell Press

Murray, Andrew [1963 ed] *The Spirit of Christ*, Marshall, Morgan and Scott.

Review:

Session1 :On the inside, each of us has become a dwelling place of the Spirit.

Session2: Distinguishing the functioning difference of body, soul and spirit

Session 3: Led by the Spirit: knowing the character and tone of voice and activity of the Spirit

Session 4: The Temple of the Holy Spirit

Session 5: The 'newness' of the Spirit [as against the 'oldness' of the letter]

1. The Significance of Jn 14.15-16; Acts 5.32; Mk 3.35

Sometimes these two texts throw up the question: "Surely we need the power of the Spirit in order to be obedient." How shall we understand Jesus teaching prior to Pentecost that if they love Him they will obey Him and He will then pray the Father to send the Spirit? Further how shall we understand the answer of the apostles post Pentecost where they understand that they have received the Spirit as those who already obey God?

The Holy Spirit [the Spirit of holiness], under the old covenant, prepared the way for the higher revelation of God as the Father of Jesus Christ. He had worked in the disciples of the Lord. What they were to receive, under Jesus' promise, was something higher, it was the Spirit of the glorified Jesus, communicating the full experience of salvation.

For the disciples, they were living at the time when the Lord was upon the earth and working out their salvation through his flesh; specifically through his life, death and resurrection. In this way they met him through their senses [1 John 1.1-4], and in the economy of God it was a matter of timing which made their obedience to Him a prior event to their reception of his glorified life through the coming of the Spirit.

They had responded to Him with the faith that his call to them had evoked. They had remained with him, obeyed his instructions on the road, as to their common life together and then received his authority to preach and cast out demons and heal. They had found his revelation of the suffering son of man difficult, and as it involved them in being corrected about their own fleshly life, they had been with him on the way to Jerusalem. Any obedience that they had rendered was the work of the Spirit upon them, and with them. It was in this knowledge of their obedience to Christ, that He promised them the higher experience of his conscious dwelling within them.

2. Adam's experience concerning command, blessing and entry to knowledge.

In paradise, Adam's obedience to knowing God as Creator/Provider was to obediently eat of the garden's fruit trees which he was commanded to eat. He knew God's commands as the word of God which, when obeyed, led to the blessing which God had prepared for him to know. In the matter of this gracious arrangement concerning the fruit of the trees of the garden, he obeyed and found the glorious sensually appreciated blessing of the food given him and Eve. Through obedience to God's Word, they entered into a knowledge, not only of the fruit, sensually speaking, but they also knew God, through his Word, as their Provider and Creator. They had

[1] the revelation of God's word

[2] they took that Word on trust as true,

[3] they obeyed God in this way

[4] they entered into the knowledge of what that Word put before them.

In this way we see that there is no knowledge without revelation, there is no knowledge without faith, and there is no knowledge without obedience.

Later, concerning one of the trees at the centre of the garden, when presented with the commandment prohibiting them to eat, Adam and Eve disobeyed. They never 'took' the knowledge of which that word, if obeyed, would have brought. They never knew God as Father. Consequently, because all men and women sin, no one has come to know God as Father prior to the coming of the Saviour in the flesh.

So we learn that by obedience and obedience alone, could the relationship with God be maintained, and admission secured to closer experience of his Love and his Life.

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3. The obedient Son of the Father.

The same relational dynamic is seen in the obedient life of the Lord from his birth to his baptism in water by John. Such obedience as led to the coming of the Spirit upon Him in power for his public ministry. He knew this as He made clear to John that what they should do in this baptism in water was to "fulfill all righteousness". It was given to Him that He should know the pleasure of his Father - who opened the heavens to say so - at his obedient life, that had led Him into this costly ministry of dealing with the sins of his people. First the obedience to the Word and Spirit, then the Spirit with power for ministry.

The Lord prepared the way for the Spirit's coming to his disciples who are in a relation to him as Master and Lord - that is, related to Him by obedience to his command. Their personal attachment to him as a Master to love and obey was their preparation for the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

4. The Spirit, under the Old Covenant, prepares the way for the higher revelation.

In the former session 5, we have already seen in the lives of Christians who had never seen the Lord and yet have received the Holy Spirit, that there is the power of the work of the Spirit in us. Yet we saw that there is a possibility of ***service in the oldness of the letter***, in bondage to law; there is also the wonderful reality of ***service of the newness of the Spirit***, in the liberty and power that Jesus, through the Spirit, gives. We saw that this was a continual choice we must make as we live in the tension of the last days in which we are set. It too, is a matter of obedience to the set of circumstances in which we are set by the salvation work of God.

5. A preceding principle.

Now, to all believers, under the new Covenant economy there is something that corresponds to this movement from obedience to the Lord to the reception of the Spirit. As it was for them, and not withstanding the difference of their times and ours, we learn that this is not a matter of simply different timing, it is a matter of, whenever we live, if dealing with the same God, whose ways do not change.

The key to understanding this matter of obedience of love *preceding* the fullness of the Holy Spirit is to know it is a matter of the relation of God with us which remains constant to the above principles we have learned from Adam to Christ.

6. A following principle

There is also a hope which arises in our persons concerning the fullness of the Spirit. For just as the love of obedience precedes the fullness of the Spirit, so the fullness of the Spirit must still follow it. They err who want the fullness of the Spirit before they obey, no less than those who think that obedience is already a sign of the fullness of the Spirit is already there.

7. The Church does not give the word obedience the prominence that Christ gave it.

There is a natural reluctance of the of the flesh to accept the high standard of holiness - particularly where the material of session 5 is not understood. There is a need to see that the freedom of grace and the simplicity of faith is preached, the absolute necessity of obedience and holiness also must go with that.

Further, we see obedience as not an avenue to blessing. We need to reconsider this and change.

Our gracious God, You have made us to know You through the obedience to your Word. And that this is our source of blessing, whether it comes for the first time or over a maintained relationship with You, holds true in all Your ways with us.

In the insecurity engendered by our sin and being preoccupied with punishment, we have so often looked upon obedience as the external, dreadful demand of a distant, Lawgiver. We are sorry for this and ask You to cleanse us from it.

But now, we have come to the liberty of sonship - we are serious about obedience as the simple response of believing Your grace offered to us.

Deliver us we pray, from thinking of our relationship with You as a contract. We desire the fullness of the holy Spirit more and more as we continue to obey the Spirit of God in the union of life we have with Him.

We will listen to our conscience and yield obedience to the Spirit. We expect You, as You did of old, to dwell in the obedience of Your people. From this place we have a boldness to expect the fullness of your Spirit for life and ministry to others.

Assist us in this matter for we call upon You in Jesus' name. Amen.