

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

OUR URGENT NEED OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 7TH, 1877, BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Through the power of the Holy Ghost”—Rom. xv. 13.

“By the power of the Spirit of God.”—Rom. xv. 19.

I DESIRE to draw your attention at this time to the great necessity which exists for the continual manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit in the church of God, if by her means the multitudes are to be gathered to the Lord Jesus. I did not know how I could much better do so than by first showing, that the Spirit of God is necessary to the church of God for its own internal growth in grace. Hence my text in the thirteenth verse, “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost,”—where it is evident that the apostle attributes the power to be filled with joy and peace in believing, and the power to abound in hope, to the Holy Ghost. But, then, I wanted also to show you that the power of the church outside, that with which she is to be aggressive and work upon the world for the gathering out of God’s elect from among men, is also this same energy of the Holy Spirit. Hence I have taken the nineteenth verse, for the apostle there says that God had through him made “the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God.” So you see, dear friends, that first of all to keep the church happy and holy within herself there must be a manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit, and secondly, that the church may invade the territories of the enemy and may conquer the world for Christ, she must be clothed with the self-same sacred energy. We may then go further and say that the power of the church for external work will be proportionate to the power which dwells within herself. Gauge the energy of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers and you may fairly calculate their influence upon unbelievers. Only let the church be illuminated by the Holy Spirit and she will reflect the light and become to onlookers “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.”

Let us by two or three illustrations show that the work outward must always depend upon the force inward. On a cold winter's day when the snow has fallen and lies deep upon the ground you go through a village. There is a row of cottages, and you will notice that from one of the roofs the snow has nearly disappeared, while another cottage still bears a coating of snow. You do not stay to make enquiries as to the reason of the difference, for you know very well what is the cause. There is a fire burning inside the one cottage and the warmth glows through its roof, and so the snow speedily melts: in the other there is no tenant; it is a house to let, no fire burns on its hearth and no warm smoke ascends the chimney, and therefore there lies the snow. Just as the warmth is within so the melting will be without. I look at a number of churches, and where I see worldliness and formalism lying thick upon them, I am absolutely certain that there is not the warmth of Christian life within; but where the hearts of believers are warm with divine love through the Spirit of God, we are sure to see evils vanish, and beneficial consequences following therefrom. We need not look within; in such a case the exterior is index sufficient.

Take an illustration from political life. Here is a trouble arising between different nations; there are angry spirits stirring, and it seems very likely that the Gordian knot of difficulty will never be untied by diplomacy, but will need to be cut with the sword. Everybody knows that one of the hopes of peace lies in the bankrupt condition of the nation which is likely to go to war; for if it be short of supplies, if it cannot pay its debts, if it cannot furnish the material for war, then it will not be likely to court a conflict. A country must be strong in internal resources before it can wisely venture upon foreign wars. Thus is it in the great battle of truth: a poor starveling church cannot combat the devil and his armies. Unless the church is herself rich in the things of God, and strong with divine energy, she will generally cease to be aggressive, and will content herself with going on with the regular routine of Christian work, crying, "Peace! peace!" where peace should not be. She will not dare to defy the world, or to send forth her legions to conquer its provinces for Christ, when her own condition is pitiably weak. The strength or weakness of a nation's exchequer affects its army in its every march, and in like manner its measure of grace influences the church of God in all its action.

Suffer yet another illustration. If you lived in Egypt, you would notice, once in the year, the Nile rising; and you would watch its increase with anxiety, because the extent of the overflow of the Nile is very much the measure of the fertility of Egypt. Now the rising of the Nile must depend upon those far-off lakes in the centre of Africa—whether they shall be well filled with the melting of the snows or no. If there be a scanty supply in the higher reservoirs, there cannot be much overflow in the Nile in its after-course through Egypt. Let us translate the figure, and say that, if the upper lakes of

fellowship with God in the Christian Church are not well filled—if the soul’s spiritual strength be not sustained by private prayer and communion with God—the Nile of practical Christian service will never rise to the flood.

The one thing I want to say is this: you cannot get out of the Church what is not in it. The reservoir itself must be filled before it can pour forth a stream. We must ourselves drink of the living water till we are full, and then out of the midst of us shall flow rivers of living water; but not till then. Out of an empty basket you cannot distribute loaves and fishes, however hungry the crowd may be. Out of an empty heart you cannot speak full things, nor from a lean soul bring forth fat things full of marrow, which shall feed the people of God. Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh, when it speaks to edification at all. So that the first thing is to look well to home affairs, and pray that God would bless *us* and cause his face to shine upon *us*, that his way may be known upon earth, and his saving health among all people.

“To bless thy chosen race,
In mercy, Lord, incline,
And cause the brightness of thy face
On all thy saints to shine.

“That so thy wondrous way
May through the world be known;
Whilst distant lands their tribute pay,
And thy salvation own.”

This morning, in trying to speak of the great necessity of the Church, namely, her being moved vigorously by the power of the Holy Spirit, I earnestly pray that we may enter upon this subject with the deepest conceivable reverence. Let us adore while we are meditating; let us feel the condescension of this blessed Person of the Godhead in deigning to dwell in his people and to work in the human heart. Let us remember that this divine person is very sensitive. He is a jealous God. We read of his being grieved and vexed, and therefore let us ask his forgiveness of the many provocations which he must have received from our hands. With lowliest awe let us bow before him, remembering that, if there be a sin which is unpardonable, it has a reference to himself—the sin against the Holy Ghost, which shall never be forgiven, neither in this world nor in that which is to come. In reference to the Holy Ghost we stand on very tender ground indeed; and if ever we should veil our faces and rejoice with trembling, it is while we speak of the Spirit, and of those mysterious works with which he blesses us. In that lowly spirit, and under the divine overshadowing follow me while I set before you seven works of the Holy Spirit which are most necessary to the Church for its own

good, and equally needful to her in her office of missionary from Christ to the outside world.

I. To begin, then, the power of the Holy Ghost is manifested in the QUICKENING of souls to spiritual life. All the spiritual life which exists in this world is the creation of the Holy Spirit, by whom the Lord Jesus quickeneth whomsoever he will. You and I had not life enough to know our death till he visited us, we had not light enough to perceive that we were in darkness, nor sense enough to feel our misery: we were so utterly abandoned to our own folly that, though we were naked, and poor, and miserable, we dreamed that we were rich, and increased in goods. We were under sentence of death as condemned criminals, and yet we talked about merit and reward; yea, we were dead, and yet we boasted that we were alive—counting our very death to be our life. The Spirit of God in infinite mercy came to us with his mysterious power, and made us live. The first token of life was a consciousness of our being in the realm of death, and an agony to escape from it; we began to perceive our insensibility, and, if I may be pardoned such an expression, we saw our blindness. Every growth of spiritual life, from the first tender shoot until now, has also been the work of the Holy Spirit. As the green blade was his production, so is the ripening corn. The increase of life, as much as life at the beginning, must still come by the operation of the Spirit of God, who raised up Christ from the dead. You will never have more life, brother, except as the Holy Ghost bestows it upon you; yea, you will not even know that you want more, nor groan after more, except as he worketh in you to desire and to agonise, according to his own good pleasure. See, then, our absolute dependence upon the Holy Spirit; for if he were gone we should relapse into spiritual death, and the Church would become a charnel-house.

The Holy Spirit is absolutely needful to make everything that we do to be alive. We are sowers, brethren, but if we take dead seed in our seed-basket there will never be a harvest. The preacher must preach living truth in a living manner if he expects to obtain a hundred-fold harvest. How much there is of church work which is nothing better than the movement of a galvanized corpse. How much of religion is done as if it were performed by an automaton, or ground off by machinery. Now-a-days men care little about heart and soul, they only look at outward performances. Why, I hear they have now invented a machine which talks, though surely there was talk enough without this Parisian addition to the band of prattlers. We can preach as machines, we can pray as machines, and we can teach Sunday-school as machines. Men can give mechanically, and come to the communion-table mechanically: yes, and we ourselves shall do so unless the Spirit of God be with us. Most hearers know what it is to hear a live sermon which quivers all over with fulness of energy; you also know what it is to sing a hymn in a lively manner, and you know what it is to unite in a live prayer-meeting; but, ah, if the Spirit of God

be absent, all that the church does will be lifeless, the rustle of leaves above a tomb, the gliding of spectres, the congregation of the dead turning over in their graves.

As the Spirit of God is a quickener to make us alive and our work alive, so must he specially be with us to make those alive with whom we have to deal for Jesus. Imagine a dead preacher preaching a dead sermon to dead sinners: what can possibly come of it? Here is a beautiful essay which has been admirably elaborated, and it is coldly read to the cold-hearted sinner. It smells of the midnight oil, but it has no heavenly unction, no divine power resting upon it, nor, perhaps, is that power even looked for. What good can come of such a production? As well may you try to calm the tempest with poetry or stay the hurricane with rhetoric as to bless a soul by mere learning and eloquence. It is only as the Spirit of God shall come upon God's servant and shall make the word which he preaches to drop as a living seed into the heart that any result can follow his ministry; and it is only as the Spirit of God shall then follow that seed and keep it alive in the soul of the listener that we can expect those who profess to be converted to take root and grow to maturity of grace, and become our sheaves at the last.

We are utterly dependent here, and for my part I rejoice in this absolute dependence. If I could have a stock of power to save souls which would be all my own apart from the Spirit of God, I cannot suppose a greater temptation to pride and to living at a distance from God. It is well to be weak in self, and better still to be nothing: to be simply the pen in the hand of the Spirit of God, unable to write a single letter upon the tablets of the human heart except as the hand of the Holy Spirit shall use us for that purpose. That is really our position, and we ought practically to take it up; and doing so we shall continually cry to the Spirit of God to quicken us in all things, and quicken all that we do, and quicken the word as it drops into the sinner's ear. I am quite certain that a church which is devoid of life cannot be the means of life-giving to the dead sinners around it. No. Everything acts after its kind, and we must have a living church for living work. O that God would quicken every member of this church! "What," say you, "do you think some of us are not alive unto God?" Brethren, there are some of you concerning whom I am certain, as far as one can judge of another, that you have life, for we can see it in all that you do; but there are some others of you concerning whose spiritual life one has to exercise a good deal of faith and a great deal more charity, for we do not perceive in you much activity in God's cause, nor care for the souls of others, nor zeal for the divine glory. If we do not see any fruits, what can we do but earnestly pray that you may not turn out to be barren trees?

That is the first point, and we think it is as clear as possible that we must have the quickening power of the Spirit for ourselves if we are to be the means in the hand of God of awakening dead souls.

II. Next it is one of the peculiar offices of the Holy Spirit to ENLIGHTEN his people. He has done so by giving us his Word, which he has inspired; but the Book, inspired though it be, is never spiritually understood by any man apart from the personal teaching of its great Author. You may read it as much as you will, and never discover the inner and vital sense unless your soul shall be led into it by the Holy Ghost himself. "What," saith one, "I have learned the shorter catechism and I have got the creed by heart, and yet do I know nothing?" I answer, you have done well to learn the letter of truth, but you still need the Spirit of God to make it the light and power of God to your soul. The letter you may know, and know it better than some who know also the spirit, and I do not for a moment depreciate a knowledge of the letter, unless you suppose that there is something saving in mere head knowledge; but the Spirit of God must come, and makes the letter alive to you, transfer it to your heart, set it on fire and make it burn within you, or else its divine force and majesty will be hid from your eyes. No man knows the things of God save one to whom the Spirit of God has revealed them. No carnal mind can understand spiritual things. We may use language as plain as a pikestaff, but the man who has no spiritual understanding is a blind man, and the clearest light will not enable him to see. Ye must be taught of the Lord, or you will die in ignorance. Now, my brethren, suppose that in a church there should be many who have never been thus instructed, can you not see that evil must and will come of it? Error is sure to arise where truth is not experimentally known. If professors be not taught of the Spirit their ignorance will breed conceit, pride, unbelief, and a thousand other evils. Oh, hadst thou known more of truth, my brother, thou hadst not boasted so! Oh, hadst thou seen that truth which as yet has not been revealed to thee because of thy prejudice, thou hadst not so fiercely condemned those who are better than thyself! With much zeal to do good, men have done a world of mischief through want of instruction in divine things. Sorrow too comes of ignorance. O, my brother, hadst thou known the doctrines of grace thou hadst not been so long a time in bondage! Half of the heresy in the church of God is not wilful error, but error which springs of not knowing the truth, not searching the Scriptures with a teachable heart, not submitting the mind to the light of the Holy Ghost. We should, as a rule, treat heresy rather as ignorance to be enlightened than as crime to be condemned; save, alas, that sometimes it becomes wilful perversity, when the mind is greedy after novelty, or puffed up with self-confidence: then other treatment may become painfully necessary. Beloved, if the Spirit of God will but enlighten the church thoroughly there will be an end of divisions. Schisms are generally occasioned by ignorance, and the proud spirit which will not brook correction. On the other hand, real, lasting, practical unity will exist in proportion to the unity of men's minds in the truth of God. Hence the necessity for the Spirit of God to conduct us into

the whole truth. My dear brother, if you think you know a doctrine, ask the Lord to make you sure that you know it, for much that we think we know turns out to be unknown when times of trial put us to the test. Nothing do we really know unless it be burnt into our souls as with a hot iron by an experience, which only the Spirit of God can give.

I think you will now see that, the Spirit of God being thus necessary for our instruction, we pre-eminently find in this gracious operation our strength for the instruction of others; for how shall those teach who have never been taught? How shall men declare a message which they have never learned? “Son of man, eat this roll for until thou hast eaten it thyself thy lips can never tell it out to others. “The husbandman that laboureth must first be a partaker of the fruits.” It is the law of Christ’s vineyard that none shall work therein till first of all they know the flavour of the fruits which grow in the sacred enclosure. Thou must know Christ, and grace, and love, and truth thyself before thou canst even be an instructor of babes for Christ.

When we come to deal with others, earnestly longing to instruct them for Jesus, we perceive even more clearly our need of the Spirit of God. Ah, my brother, you think you will put the gospel so clearly that they *must* see it; but their blind eyes overcome you. Ah! you think you will put it so zealously that they *must* feel it; but their clay-cold hearts defeat you. Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon, depend upon that. You may think you are going to win souls by your pleadings, but you might as well stand on the top of a mountain and whistle to the wind. Unless the Holy Spirit be with you. After all your talking, your hearers will, perhaps, have caught *your* idea, but the mind of the Spirit, the real soul of the gospel, you cannot impart to them; this remains, like creation itself a work which only God can accomplish. Daily, then, let us pray for the power of the Spirit as the Illuminator. Come, O blessed Light of God! You, alone, can break our personal darkness and only when You have enlightened us can we lead others in Your light! An ignorant Christian is disqualified for great usefulness, but he who is taught of God will teach transgressors God’s ways and sinners shall be converted unto Christ! Both to burn within and shine without you must have the illuminating Spirit!

III. One work of the Spirit of God is to create in believers the spirit of ADOPTION. “Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, whereby you cry, Abba, Father!” “For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!” We are regenerated by the Holy Spirit and so receive the nature of children—and that nature, which is given by him, he continually prompts, excites, develops and matures—so that we receive day by day more and more of the child-like spirit. Now, beloved, this may not seem to you to be of very great importance at first sight, but it is, for the

church is never happy except all her members walk as dear children towards God. Sometimes the spirit of slaves creeps over us—we begin to talk of the service of God as though it were heavy and burdensome—and are discontent if we do not receive present wages and visible success, just as servants do when they are not happy. But the spirit of adoption works for love, without any hope of reward, and it is satisfied with the sweet fact of being in the Father’s house and doing the Father’s will. This spirit gives peace, rest, joy, boldness and holy familiarity with God. A man who never received the spirit of a child towards God does not know the bliss of the Christian life; he misses its flower, its savour, its excellence; and I should not wonder if the service of Christ should be a weariness to him, because he has never, yet, got to the sweet things and does not enjoy the green pastures, where the Good Shepherd makes his sheep to feed and to lie down. But when the Spirit of God makes us feel that we are sons and daughters, and we live in the House of God to go no more out forever, then the service of God is sweet and easy, and we accept the delay of apparent success as a part of the trial we are called to bear.

Now, mark you, this will have a great effect upon the outside world. A body of professors performing religion as a task, groaning along the ways of godliness with faces full of misery, like slaves who dread the lash, can have but small effect upon the sinners around them. They say, “Those people serve, no doubt, a hard master, and they are denying themselves this and that. Why should we be like they?” But bring me a church made up of children of God—a company of men and women whose faces shine with their heavenly Father’s smile! Who are accustomed to take their cares and cast them on their Father as children should! Who know they are accepted and loved, and are perfectly content with the great Father’s will! Put them down in the midst of a company of ungodly ones and I will guarantee you they will begin to envy them their peace and joy.

Thus happy saints become most efficient operators upon the minds of the unsaved. O blessed Spirit of God! Let us all, now, feel that we are the children of the great Father and let our child-like love be warm this morning; and so shall we be fit to go forth and proclaim the Lord’s love to the prodigals who are in the far-off land among the swine.

These three points are self-evident, I think. Now pass to a fourth.

IV. The Holy Spirit is especially called the Spirit of HOLINESS. He never suggested sin nor approved of it, nor has he ever done otherwise than grieve over it: but holiness is the Spirit’s delight. The church of God wears upon her brow the words, “Holiness to the Lord.” Only in proportion as she is holy may she claim to be the church of God at all. An unholy church! Surely this cannot be her of whom we read, “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water

by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” Holiness is not mere morality, not the outward keeping of divine precepts out of a hard sense of duty, while those commandments in themselves are not delightful to us. Holiness, is the entirety of our manhood fully consecrated to the Lord and moulded to his will. This is the thing which the church of God must have, but it can never have it apart from the Sanctifier, for there is not a grain of holiness beneath the sky but what is of the operation of the Holy Ghost. And, brethren, if a church be destitute of holiness what effect can it have upon the world? Scoffers utterly contemn and despise professors whose inconsistent lives contradict their verbal testimonies. An unholy church may pant and struggle after dominion, and make what noise she can in pretence of work for Christ, but the kingdom comes not to the unholy, neither have they themselves entered it. The testimony of unholy men is no more acceptable to Christ than was the homage which the evil spirit gave to him in the days of his flesh, to which he answered, “Hold thy peace.” “Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?” The dew is withholden, and the rain cometh not in its season to the tillage of those who profess to be the servants of God and yet sow iniquity. After all, the acts of the church preach more to the world than the words of the church. Put an anointed man to preach the gospel in the midst of a really godly people and his testimony will be marvellously supported by the church with which he labours; but place the most faithful minister over an ungodly church, and he has such a weight upon him that he must first clear himself of it, or he cannot succeed. He may preach his heart out, he may pray till his knees are weary, but conversions will be sorely hindered, if indeed they occur at all. There is no likelihood of victory to Israel while Achan’s curse is on the camp. An unholy church makes Christ to say that he cannot do many mighty works there because of its iniquity.

Brethren, do you not see in this point our need of the Spirit of God? And when you get to grappling terms with sinners, and have to talk to them about the necessity of holiness, and a renewed heart, and a godly life coming out of that renewed heart, do you expect ungodly men to be charmed with what you say? What cares the unregenerate mind for righteousness? Was a carnal man ever eager after holiness? Such a thing was never seen. As well expect the devil to be in love with God as an unredeemed heart to be in love with holiness. But yet the sinner must love that which is pure and right, or he cannot enter heaven. *You* cannot make him do so. Who can do it but that Holy Ghost who has made you to love what once you also despised? Go not out, therefore, to battle with sin until you have taken weapons out of the armoury of the Eternal Spirit. Mountains of sin will not turn to plains at your bidding unless the Holy Ghost is pleased to make the word effectual. So then we see that as the Spirit of holiness we need the Holy Spirit,

V. Fifthly, the church needs much PRAYER, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of grace and of supplications. The strength of a church may pretty accurately be gauged by her prayerfulness. We cannot expect God to put forth his power unless we entreat him so to do. But all acceptable supplication is wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost. The first desire which God accepts must have been excited in the heart by the secret operations of the Holy One of Israel, and every subsequent pleading of every sort which containeth in it a grain of living faith, and therefore comes up as a memorial before the Lord, must have been effectually wrought in the soul by him who maketh intercession in the saints according to the will of God. Our great High Priest will put into his censer no incense but that which the Spirit has compounded. Prayer is the creation of the Holy Ghost. We cannot do without prayer, and we cannot pray without the Holy Spirit; and hence our dependence on him.

Furthermore, when we come to deal with sinners, we know that they must pray. "Behold he prayeth" is one of the earliest signs of the new birth. But can *we* make the sinner pray? Can any persuasion of ours lead him to his knees to breathe the penitential sigh and look to Christ for mercy? If you have attempted the conversion of a soul in your own strength, you know you have failed; and so you would have, if you had attempted the creation of one single acceptable prayer in the heart of even a little child. Oh then, dear brethren, let us cry to our heavenly Father to give the Holy Spirit to us; let us ask him to be in us more and more mightily as the spirit of prayer, making intercession in us with groanings that cannot be uttered, that the church may not miss the divine blessing for lack of asking for it. I do verily believe this to be her present weakness, and one great cause why the kingdom of Christ does not more mightily spread: prayer is too much restrained, and hence the blessing is kept back; and it will always be restrained unless the Holy Ghost shall stimulate the desires of his people. O blessed Spirit, we pray thee make us pray, for Jesus' sake.

VI. Sixthly, the Spirit of God is in a very remarkable manner the giver of FELLOWSHIP. So often as we pronounce the apostolic benediction we pray that we may receive the communion of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost enables us to have communion with spiritual things. He alone can take the key and open up the secret mystery, that we may know the things which be of God. He gives us fellowship with God himself: through Jesus Christ by the Spirit we have access to the Father. Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, but it is the Spirit of God who brings us into communion with the Most High. So, too, my dear brethren, our fellowship with one another, so far as it is Christian fellowship, is always produced by the Spirit of God. If we have continued together in peace and love these many years, I cannot attribute it to our constitutional good tempers, nor to wise management, nor to any natural causes, but to the love into which the Spirit

has baptized us, so that rebellious nature has been still. If a dozen Christian people live together for twelve months in true spiritual union and unbroken affection, trace it to the love of the Spirit; and if a dozen hundred, or four times that number shall be able to persevere in united service, and find themselves loving each other better after many years than they did at the first, let it be regarded as a blessing from the Comforter, for which he is to be devoutly adored. Fellowship can only come to us by the Spirit, but a church without fellowship would be a disorderly mob, a kingdom divided against itself, and consequently it could not prosper. You need fellowship for mutual strength, guidance, help, and encouragement, and without it your church is a mere human society.

If you are to tell upon the world you must be united as one living body. A divided church has long been the scorn of Antichrist. No sneer which comes from the Vatican has a greater sting in it than that which taunts Protestants with their divisions; and as it is with the great outward church so it is with any one particular church of Christ. Divisions are our disgrace, our weakness, our hindrance, and as the gentle Spirit alone can prevent or heal these divisions by giving us real loving fellowship with God and with one another, how dependent we are upon him for it. Let us daily cry to him to work in us brotherly love, and all the sweet graces which make us one with Christ, that we all may be one even as the Father is one with the Son, that the world may know that God hath indeed sent Jesus, and that we are his people.

VII. Seventhly, we need the Holy Spirit in that renowned office which is described by our Lord as THE PARACLETE, or Comforter. The word bears another rendering, which our translators have given to it in that passage where we read, "If any man sin we have an Advocate (or Paraclete) with the Father." The Holy Spirit is both Comforter and Advocate.

The Holy Spirit at this present moment is our friend and *Comforter*, sustaining the sinking spirits of believers, applying the precious promises, revealing the love of Jesus Christ to the heart. Many a heart would break if the Spirit of God had not comforted it. Many of God's dear children would have utterly died by the way if he had not bestowed upon them his divine consolations to cheer their pilgrimage. That is his work, and a very necessary work, for if believers become unhappy they become weak for many points of service. I am certain that the joy of the Lord is our strength, for I have proved it so, and proved also the opposite truth. There are on earth certain Christians who inculcate gloom as a Christian's proper state, I will not judge them, but this I will say, that in evangelistic work they do nothing, and I do not wonder. Till snow in harvest ripens wheat, till darkness makes flowers blossom, till the salt sea yields clusters bursting with new wine, you will never find an unhappy religion promotive of the growth of the kingdom of Christ. You must have joy in the Lord, brethren, if you are to be strong *in* the Lord, and

strong *for* the Lord. Now, as the Comforter alone can bear you up amid the floods of tribulation which you are sure to meet with, you see your great need of his consoling presence.

We have said that the Spirit of God is the *Advocate* of the church,—not with God, for there Christ is our sole Advocate,—but with man. What is the grandest plea that the church has against the world? I answer, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the standing miracle of the church. External evidences are very excellent. You young men who are worried by sceptics will do well to study those valuable works, which learned and devout men have with much labour produced for us, but, mark you, all the evidences of the truth of Christianity which can be gathered from analogy, from history, and from external facts, are nothing whatever compared with the operations of the Spirit of God. These are the arguments which convince. A man says to me, “I do not believe in sin, in righteousness, or in judgment.” Well, brethren, the Holy Ghost can soon convince him. If he asks me for signs and evidences of the truth of the gospel, I reply, “Seest thou this woman; she was a great sinner in the very worst sense, and led others into sin, but now you cannot find more sweetness and light anywhere than in her. Hearest thou this profane swearer, persecutor, and blasphemer? He is speaking with purity, truth, and humbleness of mind. Observe yon man, who was aforetime a miser, and see how he consecrates his substance. Notice that envious, malicious spirit, and see how it becomes gentle, forgiving, and amiable through conversion. How do you account for these great changes? They are happening here every day, how come they to pass? Is that a lie which produces truth, honesty, and love? Does not every tree bear fruit after its kind? What then must that grace be which produces such blessed transformations? The wonderful phenomena of ravens turned to doves, and lions into lambs, the marvellous transformations of moral character which the minister of Christ rejoices to see wrought by the Gospel, these are our witnesses, and they are unanswerable. Peter and John have gone up to the temple, and they have healed a lame man, they are soon seized and brought before the Sanhedrim. This is the charge against them—“You have been preaching in the name of Jesus, and this Jesus is an impostor.” What do Peter and John say? They need say nothing, for there stands the man that was healed; he has brought his crutch with him, and he waves it in triumph, and he runs and leaps. He was their volume of evidences, their apology, and proof. “When they saw the man that was healed standing with Peter and John, they could say nothing against them.”

If we have the Spirit of God amongst us, and conversions are constantly being wrought, the Holy Spirit is thus fulfilling his advocacy, and refuting all accusers. If the Spirit works in your own mind, it will always be to you the best evidence of the gospel. I meet sometimes one piece of infidelity, and then another; for there are new doubts and fresh infidelities spawned every

hour, and unstable men expect us to read all the books they choose to produce. But the effect produced on our mind is less and less. This is our answer. It is of no use your trying to stagger us, for we are already familiar with everything you suggest; our own native unbelief has outstripped you. We have had doubts of a kind which even you would not dare to utter if you knew them; for there is enough infidelity and devilry in our own nature to make us no strangers to Satan's devices. We have fought most of your suggested battles over and over again in the secret chamber of our meditation, and have conquered. For *we have been in personal contact with God*. You sneer, but there is no argument in sneering. We are as honest as you are, and our witness is as good as yours in any court of law; and we solemnly declare that we have felt the power of the Holy Spirit over our soul as much as ever old ocean has felt the force of the north wind: we have been stirred to agony under a sense of sin, and we have been lifted to ecstasy of delight by faith in the righteousness of Christ. We find that in the little world within our soul the Lord Jesus manifests himself so that we know him. There is a potency about the doctrines we have learned which could not belong to lies, for the truths which we believe we have tested in actual experience. Tell us there is no meat? Why, we have just been feasting. Tell us there is no water in the fountain? We have been quenching our thirst. Tell us there is no such thing as light? We do not know how we can prove its existence to you, for you are probably blind, but *we* can see. That is enough argument for us, and our witness is true. Tell us there is no spiritual life! We feel it in our inmost souls. These are the answers with which the Spirit of God furnishes us, and they are a part of his advocacy.

See, again, how entirely dependent we are on the Spirit of God for meeting all the various forms of unbelief which arise around us; you may have your societies for collecting evidence, and you may enlist all your bishops and doctors of divinity and professors of apologetics, and they may write rolls of evidence long enough to girdle the globe, but the only person who can savingly convince the world is the Advocate whom the Father has sent in the name of Jesus. When he reveals a man's sin, and the sure result of it, the unbeliever takes to his knees. When he takes away the scales and sets forth the crucified Redeemer, and the merit of the precious blood, all carnal reasonings are nailed to the cross. One blow of real conviction of sin will stagger the most obstinate unbeliever, and afterwards, if his unbelief return, the Holy Ghost's consolations will soon comfort it out of him. Therefore, as at the first so say I at the last, all this dependeth upon the Holy Ghost, and upon him let us wait in the name of Jesus, beseeching him to manifest his power among us. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans xv.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—912, 446, 445.
