

THE PENTECOSTAL GIFT AS A PRESENCE.

Rev. S. A. Keen, D. D.

The highest gift provided for and promised to the child of God under the atonement is the gift of the Holy Ghost. As the coming of the Holy Spirit was the largest hope of prophecy, so His personal presence, immanent in the Church, and realized in believing hearts, is the highest fulfilling of prophecy. The predictions of Old Testament prophecy, focalized in the strong, clear note, "I will put my Spirit within you," and the culmination of all New Testament promise, as it fell from the lips of Jesus, was, "He shall be in you." The "with-in you" of prophecy, and the "in you" of promise, define that manifestation of the Holy Ghost which constitutes the gift of Himself. It is the personal relationship by which He is conjoined to the soul as the spiritual presence through faith. The Third Person of the adorable Trinity enters the soul to be an abiding guest, making the believer a habitation of God through the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is more than a name, an influence, a force; He is a Person; hence the gift of Himself implies more than any effects He may produce in us, or any endowment He may impart to us. The manifestation of Himself in His activities, and the manifestation of Himself in His presence to the soul, effectuate quite different results. Having Him "with you" is one thing; having Him "in you" is another. Jesus was careful so to discriminate. He said to the disciples: "Ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be "in you."

There are two very important distinctions that should be noted, in order to a clear apprehension of the gift of the Holy Spirit as a presence in the soul.

1. The gift of the Holy Ghost is distinct from the Supernatural Endowments of the Spirit. The Apostle Paul, in I Cor. 12, speaks of certain gifts to the Spirit, such as the gifts of healing, miracles, tongues, interpretations, etc.—sovereign, supernatural bestowments, which the Spirit divideth to every man, severally as He will. These gifts of the Spirit either separately or collectively, do not constitute the gift of the Spirit. One might have the gift of the Spirit.

There were those in the Corinthian Church who had the supernatural endowments of the Spirit, but who evidently had not the indwelling presence of the Spirit. There were unseemly rivalries between those who possessed these gifts, amounting to contentions and variances respecting their relative importance. Undue emulations had been excited by the possession of these gifts in so much that the Apostle was moved by inspiration to write them, defining their design, relative importance, and subordinate place in respect to the gift of the Holy Spirit Himself.

He allowed that these gifts were desirable, and might be coveted, but only in a certain order. He points out a more excellent way, giving his matchless apostrophe to love as the supreme endowment in I Cor. 13, appending the exhortation, "Follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts." The gift of the Holy Ghost imparts this supreme endowment of love in its fulness; and, as Mr. Wesley says, "There is nothing higher nor better in religion than love, and when one aims at something other or more than love, he aims wide of the mark." The gift of the Holy Ghost does not make the child of God a miracle worker or supernatural prod-

igy. It does render him a wonder of grace, destroying sin in him, enthroning Christ within, and empowering him for Christian service. These supernatural endowments might co-exist with the gift of the Holy Spirit, either occasionally or permanently. Paul had power to heal sometimes, not at others. But, filled with the Holy Ghost, he could say, whithersoever he went, "I know I shall come unto you in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ." This gift of the Spirit Himself is not transient; it is abiding. He is the ranking endowment; the superior bestowment. "Whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." "He shall abide with you forever."

2. The gift of the Holy Ghost is distinct from the gracious bestowments of the Spirit. As the gift of the Spirit is to be distinguished from His supernatural endowments, so it is not to be confounded with His gracious bestowments.

Every child of God is the subject of diversified operations of the Spirit. Awakening, renewal, assurance, comfort, light, warmth, strength, guidance—all these are gracious benefits of the Spirit. Such blessings of the Spirit do not constitute nor imply the gift of the Holy Spirit Himself as an indwelling presence. Better than these, as precious and invaluable as they are, is the conscious presence of the Blessor Himself.

To many of God's children the Holy Spirit is like an absent friend, a father, or husband, or son, sending home messages of affection, and bestowing precious gifts, but himself never coming home to be welcomed, greeted, fellowshiped, and enjoyed in his personal presence at the fire. His wife, sister have his gifts, but not him.

In the year 1850 when the "gold fever" was raging throughout the land, and many were leaving their homes and friends to seek their fortunes in the mines of California, a gentleman in Ohio who had an interesting family—a wife and two daughters, ages seven and nine years—said to them, "We are not getting on very well. I work hard, and barely make a livelihood. With your consent, I believe I will go to the gold regions on the Pacific Coast, and see if I cannot improve our temporal condition." They consented. He went, reached the gold fields safely, and soon had the good fortune to open lucrative mines. Every steamer that came from Panama to New York brought to his wife and daughters letters of affection and remittances of money. The letters were frequent, the amount of money increased, until the family was able to live better, have more comforts, and finally to build and furnish a comfortable home. This went on for seven long years, when the wife and daughters grew heart-sick and weary of the husband and father's absence. They sat down and wrote him a letter like this: "Father, we have had enough of your gifts, we want you. Come home, come home. We cannot enjoy anything you have sent us longer without you. Come, O come!" On receipt of this letter, he closed up his mining enterprises, settled his business affairs and took steamer for Panama, thence to New York, thence home. Think you not that from the moment he stepped into that home, there came into it a light and a cheer, a joy which his gifts, however precious, had not ministered! He was more to their hearts and that home than all the bestowments which he had lavished upon them.

So the benefits of the Spirit in pardon, in adoption, in comfort, in joy, in a thousand forms of blessedness, are all precious to the child of God; but when he gives Himself to the soul, it is joy unspeakable and full of glory. When superadded to His gifts we receive the Giver, there comes with Him a salvation and satisfaction, complete and permanent. Having had so many blessings of the Spirit, let us now receive the Giver Himself. He is the gift.

3. The gift of the Holy Ghost as a presence imparts a distinctive temper and tone to the Christian life.

You hold in your hands two bars of metal. They seem just alike. They have the same size, shape, weight and color. You detect, however, that one has a power that the other has not. It attracts other substances and holds them. The one is a magnet, the other is not. To one is conjoined an ethereal presence called magnetism. It is this that transforms the one into a force the other does not exert. So the Holy Spirit, received into the soul of a believer, transforms him into a spiritual force hitherto unpossessed. The difference between one child of God and another is not a difference of earnestness, sincerity or devotion, but in this: one has the baptism with the Holy Ghost; the other has not. Take two Christian workers, class leaders, Sunday school teachers, missionaries, both converted, consistent, consecrated. One is fearful, despondent, ineffective; the other is courageous, hopeful, successful. What is the difference? The latter has the gift of the Holy Ghost.

A returned missionary who had been twenty years in the field heard this very exposition of the gift of the Holy Ghost. At the close, he came to us with tears in his eyes and said, "I see it." For twenty years I have labored beside Brother L.; he has been steady and patient, and has seen things come to pass. I have worked just as hard as he; but have fretted, have had but little comfort, and much less fruit. It is all clear. Brother L. has the gift of the Holy Ghost and I have not. I must have it." Then, bowing, midst weeping penitents and returning backsliders, he soon rose from the altar, his scholarly, manly face glowing with holy light, saying as he did so, "It will be different hereafter in my work."

The child of God suffers in a different spirit when he has the fulness of the Spirit from what he does without it. With it, he is resigned, trustful, jubilant; without it, he is full of doubts, murmurings and impatience. Years since, when a pastor, we went one morning to visit two excellent women who were greatly afflicted. They were about the same age in life. They had long been members of the church. Both were children of God. We entered the home of Sister G. "How is it with you this morning?" we said to her. She replied, "Oh, I have not slept all night. I have so much pain. It is hard to lie here. I can't see why God deals so with me." I sought to comfort her and prayed with her, yet she was evidently in controversy with God respecting her afflictions. She did not have the help of the Spirit that enables the soul to rejoice always, and in everything to give thanks. We went from her bedside to the home of Sister D., residing in the same square. We said to her, "How is it with you today?" She answered, "O, I had such a night of suffering." Then there came upon her worn face, furrowed and pale, a beautiful radiance, and she added, "but Jesus was so near, and helped me so that I could suffer this way and more, if my Father