

GIFTS AND GRACES OF THE SPIRIT

By J. E. Cramer

That God does not in this life grant us perfection of knowledge along with perfect love is well illustrated by the case of the apostles. It seems strange that after the wonderful baptism of the Holy Spirit which they received at Pentecost they should still have held the notion—now appearing to us as really monstrous—that this wonderful salvation was to be solely a Jewish affair. For upwards of eight years they continued in this belief. Yet even in this the unfailing wisdom of God is apparent. Had the authority of the Mosaic statutes been at once abrogated before Christianity had time to become somewhat established, much irreverence might have crept in and the progress of the gospel among the Jews would have been severely handicapped.

No doubt one reason why God permits this fallibility of judgment still to cling to the sanctified is that we may thus be exercised and established in humility and fortified against the insidious temptations of spiritual pride, a disease which quickly works sad havoc with the spiritual life.

Of course, this is not God's only method of safe-guarding our humility. There was the experience of the Apostle Paul. Having been all his life thrown much into contact with Gentiles, after he became a Christian his heart and mind were more intensely exercised concerning the spiritual needs of the great mass of Gentiles than were those of the other apostles. Hence it is not surprising that he was entrusted with broader revelations along these lines, and though he remained an enemy of Christ for several years after Pentecost, he eventually surpassed all the other apostles in his vision of God's program for the Christian era as well as in his insight into the significance of the symbolic events of Jewish history as it began with Abraham. But, along with all these and other revelations, Paul tells us that "lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." In his famous love chapter, 1 Cor. 13, Paul reminds us that knowledge alone puffeth up, but godly love buildeth up.

Returning to the case of the other apostles we find that when, through the narration of Peter's vision and of his experience with the household of Cornelius they had become fully convinced that the Gentiles were to be as such freely included in all the benefits of the gospel, they proved that they indeed possessed that perfect love which "makes me love everybody." They rejoiced over this revelation, not as a matter of mere superficial "good grace," but heartily. (How much this meant for Jews!)

In their later years the apostles may have wondered at their earlier narrowness of view. Had not the Master Himself plainly commissioned them to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature? And had not the Holy Spirit at Pentecost through them proclaimed the mighty works of God in the language of every nation under heaven? Thus indicating that this gracious gospel was to be preached in all tongues and offered as the free gift of God to all nations.

This speaking in tongues was fittingly repeated about eight years later in the home of Cornelius, where the Spirit of Pentecost was first poured out upon non-proselyte Gentiles in the presence of an apostle. And as the Apostle Peter relates this experience to the brethren at Jerusalem, his mind goes back over a space of

eight years to Pentecost and he says, "As on us at the beginning." It has been well said that if every instance, or even many instances, of the baptism with the Holy Spirit during these eight years had been accompanied by speaking in tongues, Peter would certainly not have said, "As on us at the beginning," but rather, "As on us Jews since the beginning."

The significance of the divers tongues at Pentecost must have been interpreted as pointing to the inclusion of all nations in God's plan of salvation by those unidentified Jewish Christians, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who had been scattered abroad after the martyrdom of Stephen; these men, unlike others who at this time preached to Jews only, proceeded to preach Jesus Christ to the Gentiles also with the result that a great number proved the truth of the promise that "whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Coming down to our own time, how about speaking in tongues as a "seal" of the baptism with the Holy Spirit? Apparently there are three agencies which might cause a person to thus speak a few foreign words: The Spirit of God; one's own voluntary action induced by desire; and a spirit of delusion. Now, since ordinarily no human being could positively know which of these three agencies is in any particular case responsible for the unusual utterance, it follows that speaking in tongues as a sign of the baptism could be of no value whatever. Tongues people among themselves frequently find reason for doubting the genuineness of this or that one's experience, all this proving the "tongues seal" idea to be a very serious blunder, productive of nothing but strife and confusion. To be sure, God's ways often go contrary to human reasoning; but we do know that God makes no mistakes, and that He is not a God of confusion.

As for a witness to the seeker after sanctifying experience, the Holy Spirit is abundantly able to give a clear and satisfying witness, without following the rut of using a predetermined, physical manifestation; and the proof to the world and the church of our complete dedication to God must as ever depend upon a manifestation which no spirit of delusion can imitate, namely, the manifestation of a purified heart in the purity of our everyday walk and talk. "By their fruits we shall know them."—*The Free Methodist*.

RUSSIAN REDS AND RELIGION

Russia, after confiscating lands of private citizens and forcing in a wholesale manner her people into a community compact, has evidently awakened to the fact that the matter can be overdone.

We read, "The Communist party today ordered immediate cessation of violence, official oppression and other excesses against the Russian peasants, in furtherance of the atheistic, and collectivization movements."

This order is a virtual acknowledgement of Bolshevik cruelty, and a further statement that the government has ordered the restoration of property thus taken and the reopening of churches illegally closed is an admission of her intolerance of religion.

It will take a long time to convince the world that her change of attitude arises from humane sentiments, or even from a decent consideration of the rights of others or of man in general.

Policy in carrying out a diabolical program compelled by the resistance of the people is the cause of the change.

Let no one think for a moment that she has changed her policy. It is a change of methods,

because the bald brutality in her treatment of her subjects has caused her subjects to rebel and the nations of the world to discountenance her as a government.

Russia is the same: anti-Christian, anti-God, anti-religion. If the world had been for the last two thousand years as she would have it now she would be in a state of savagery, if indeed she would be in existence at all. Her course harks back to the days of the darkest depravity. Can she not see the cruelty, brutality and beastliness of Nero, when godlessness was at its height, and the anti-God forces reigned supreme? Does she not remember when France swung to the extreme and, because of abuses in an apostate church, lost all confidence in God, and brutal depravity of godlessness dragged the Bible through the streets tied to the tail of an ass and worked the guillotine overtime until thousands were beheaded and her rivers ran blood?

Russia should study the cause of the prosperity of the world's greatest nations and place the Bible back in the hearts of her subjects.

If insincerity characterizes her course long, she will have to reckon with God some day. He who established the bounds of the sea will say to Russia, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shalt thy proud waves be stayed"—W. N. C., *The Free Methodist*.

THE HILLS

Give me the strength of the hills, O God!

The firmness of primal rock,
Standing unshaken through flood and fire
And the storms' tumultuous shock;
Though fickle opinions pass like clouds,
Though sorrows sweep like rain,
Though winds of temptation wildly blow,
Steadfast may I remain!

Give me the joy of the hills, O God!

Where the clear streams laugh and play
Where the splendor of morning earliest falls
And latest sunbeams stay;
May glorious purpose stir my soul,
As the breeze thrills the leafy slope,
And my life be green, like the cedared cliffs,
With wealth of unfading hope.

Give me the peace of the hills, O God!

Though round me the smoke be whirled,
And though from the dusty valleys below
Come the roar of the restless world;
Above the din of pleasure and care
And the empty voices of time,
Let my spirit rise to the stainless calm
Of eternity's heights sublime.

Give me the grace of the hills, O God!

Which coolness and freshness yield,
Sending down streams from their cloudy
steeps

To gladden the parching field:

Let me touch with reviving tenderness
The lives that are stunted and sear,
And bring to drooping and blighted souls
New courage and hope and cheer.

Effie Smith Ely in *Zion Herald*

VICTORY

Dr. Sewall, an old Methodist, when dying, shouted aloud the praises of God. His friends said, "Dr. Sewall, do not exert yourself; whisper, Doctor, whisper." "Let the angels whisper," said he, "but the soul cleansed from sin by the blood of Christ, a soul redeemed from death and hell, just on the threshold of eternal glory—oh, if I had a voice that would reach from pole to pole. I would proclaim it to all the world: Victory! Victory! through the blood of the Lamb!"—*The Wesleyan Methodist*.