

Passionate Heat

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the promises, and after this subtraction of sin, there is to come a glorious sum in addition or growth in grace. These graces are planted in a newly-converted soul, but, being choked and impaired by inbred sin, they do not abound. Hence the next verse says: "If these things be in you, and abound." In conversion these things are put in you, but, when fully cleansed, they grow, they abound, like an overflowing wave.

2 The work of cleansing deals with the sin in the soul; the work of growth deals with the grace that is in the soul. Hence purification and progress are as distinct in their offices as sin and grace are distinct in their character. Two men are at work on a building; one is cleansing it from rubbish, the other is enlarging and beautifying the structure. It is the office of medicine to remove disease, but it is the office of food to make flesh and blood; and so we find in Scripture that being purified from all sin is denoted as a medicinal work healing, curing, making whole, removing all distemper from the soul; but growing in grace is denominated as a feeding process, eating the finest wheat, feasting on milk and honey, eating the old corn and strong meat, and delighting itself in soul fatness. We need divine medicine as hyssop to purge out depravity and render us whiter than snow; but we need divine food to render us fat and fruitful in grace.

3 Purification is wrought in the heart only, by the power of God, and the soul can only passively trust in receiving the cleansing virtue; but growth in grace is produced by the soul's active co-operation with the will of God. The act of sanctifying the soul, making it holy, is never in Scripture ascribed to good deeds nor of grace, nor growth, nor suffering, nor death, but ever to a divine act. He creates a clean heart. He washes whiter than snow. He says "I will, be thou clean." His blood cleanseth us from all sin, not development, nor death. It is an act of God's will which sanctifies us.

4 We are purified only through faith; we grow in spiritual life by faith and works combined. "Thy faith hath made thee whole." Purifying their hearts by faith, the faith by which we receive the divine cleansing, is the very absence of all works; we quit all struggling, rest on the promise, and let God do the rest.

But to progress in a holy life demands all the good works which flow from a living faith. The soul works vigorously in a state of holiness, but it can never work itself into a state of holiness. You can swim in the water but you cannot lie on dry ground and swim into the water; you can dream in sleep, but you cannot dream yourself into sleep; you can breathe in the world, but you cannot breathe yourself into this world. We can enter purity by faith alone; we advance by faith and works combined.—The Flame (England).

"We are learning day by day that life must be simply a doing of one thing, a following hard after God, in heart for oneself, and in life for the souls of the perishing of those around us. There is only time, only strength, for this one thing, to learn of Him and to make Him known."

A spirit of indifference, laxity and skepticism surrounds us on every side. As a result the professing Church of God has to a great extent imbibed the same spirit and has become spiritually cold and negative, often critical and cynical. It is impossible to have skepticism in the mind and fire in the soul at the same time.

Doubtless a number of reasons can be given for this sad condition. We would suggest one. Too many are living on the same plans as were the two disciples before they met Jesus on the road to Emmaus. They were despondent. They were sad because of unbelief (Luke 24:17-21). But what a change! "Jesus himself drew near, and went with them." That fellowship wrought the change. So we read, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" The great need today is for burning hearts—hearts set aglow by Jesus Christ.

Someone has well said that "enthusiasm is the dynamic of personality." Holy passion is the dynamic of the real minister of the Gospel. One may possess knowledge, sound judgment and good reasoning faculties, but unless the burning heart gets into the thought and action, the soul of the message is lost. We must preach a positive Gospel red-hot from the heart.

What a lesson nature gives us on this point! The sun gives light and heat at the same time. How unfortunate would be our world if it gave only light and failed on the heat! If we enlighten men as to God's law, but fail to combine the heat of a heart set aglow with the genial warmth of a loving personality, we leave men cold. The true and able minister of the Gospel must minister both light and heat. The passion of the soul set on fire through communion with God, pouring out his very soul through tears, prayers and entreaties (along with enlightening the intellect), is a power which man cannot resist. This does not come from institutions, institutes or courses of study. It comes from a living, growing, vital, fresh contact between God and one's own soul.

Only the Holy Spirit can lodge in our words that burning summer-heat, that warming presence which kindles the soul with unction and power. Without this our ministry may have light but no heat.

This passion is kindled in our public ministry by the consciousness that one is preaching in the very presence of the Lord Himself. We read that A. J. Gordon had a dream one Saturday night which profoundly influenced all his after-ministry. In his dream he was in the pulpit, when a stranger entered and passed slowly up the aisle. A gentleman offered him a seat in his pew, which was quietly accepted. At the close of the service Doctor Gordon asked the gentlemen in whose pew the visitor sat who the stranger was. "Why, don't you know?" was the reply. "That was Jesus of Nazareth; doubtless He will come again."

"An indescribable rush of emotion came over me," writes Doctor Gordon. "To think that Jesus was present! What did He think of the service? Had I preached as I would like Him to hear? A lifetime, almost an eternity of interest, was crowded into a single moment."

"Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" This was the Apostle Paul's question to certain disciples which he found at Ephesus. No doubt many backslidings could be prevented if this question were urged upon "babes in Christ" (I Cor. 3:1) at the very beginning of their Christian life. So many are discouraged and weakened by backslidings and fear who could have gone on to better things.

The fullness of God has been in no way exhausted. That great initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was the earnest of what God wants to do for all His people. The Apostle said, "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39). Every true believer has a right to pray for this and the right to expect to receive it today.

Men often speak and act as though it were the most difficult thing in the world to obtain the fullness of the Spirit. But according to the Scripture there is no blessing which the Father is more ready to bestow upon those who ask Him than the gift of the Holy Ghost. Did not Jesus say, "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).

The question is not, "Has God given the Spirit?" but "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?"

—Selected from P. H. Advocate

That vision of the personal presence of Christ transformed Doctor Gordon's life, his ministry and his church. Do you think that a practicing of the presence of Christ in our public services would make any difference in the worthwhileness of your preaching and mine?

Some time ago I saw a cartoon in which was pictured a group of society women who had hired an architect to draw plans for a new clubhouse. The club women were assembled and the architect was being addressed by the president of the club. "We like your plans for our new clubhouse, but we don't like the shade of blue you used for the blueprints." That's it! There is a danger of being so lost in secondaries, in incidentals, in the trifles of time and sense, that no time is found for real heart-warmings, for fresh unction. The reality of the new clubhouse was dimmed in the paleness of blue in the blueprints!

"I was staying once in a summer hotel on the shores of Lake Erie," relates Doctor Dixon. "It was very pleasant. All we did was eat and drink and take walks and row on the lake. Opposite the hotel was a life-saving station where somebody was always on the lookout for the rocket and listening for the call of distress. At that life-saving station they also ate and drank, but their business in life was not eating and drinking. They slept, but their business was not sleeping. When they could, they went for walks and rode for pleasure on the lake, but that was not their business. Their great business was the saving of lives in peril." Doctor Dixon then asked the pertinent question: "Which are we—life-saving stations or merely summer hotels?" Oh, the tragedy of playing with the immortal souls of men by fooling with mere non-essentials!

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