

Looking Forward to Pentecost

DAILY DEVOTIONAL READINGS

Sunday, May 17

Freedom of the Spirit

"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." II Cor. 3:17.

Freedom is one of the finest words in the English language. Yet this noble word has been much abused in American thinking today. Many people think of freedom as the right to act as they will; it matters not how unjustly or unworthily. But such a one is not really free, for he lives and moves in the orbit of his own narrow personality. "O Liberty!" exclaimed Madam Roland on her way to the scaffold, "What crimes have been perpetrated in thy name."

In the context of the above Scripture, St. Paul sets forth the true concept of spiritual freedom which is given to the believer in the gift of the Holy Spirit. This freedom of the Spirit is in contrast to the bondage of self and the letter of the law. The secret of true freedom comes from within. It is wholly dependent on the Lord, who is the Spirit of freedom. "So if the Son sets you free, you will be really free." (Williams).

This glorious freedom was released upon the Church with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of the day of Pentecost. In possession of this heavenly gift the disciples went out through the gateway of Pentecost preaching and witnessing everywhere, demonstrating the miracle-working power of the Spirit. With their roots in Pentecost they had their fruits unto the uttermost parts of the world. For "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."—Dr. Jesse F. Lady.

Monday, May 18

Force of the Spirit

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Acts 1:8.

A religion of form or of force, which? The two ideas are not necessarily exclusive one of the other, but too often they are separate in practice. Hence Paul admonishes against "having the form of Godliness and denying the power thereof." Tim. 3:5. When religion is traditional and hereditary it may usually be said to be of form only. When it is all in a book—a Bible, a prayer book, or a hymn book, one may be sure it is form religion only. On the other hand when religion changes and transforms life, influencing the will, coloring the judgment, mastering the emotions, it may be said to be a religion of force. Now it is vital.

Only the force of the Holy Spirit can make religion real and the witness vital. No amount of human effusiveness of the flesh whipped up to espouse noble causes will either satisfy the heart or accomplish the divine purpose in the salvation of the lost. The proper order is: first the infusion of the Spirit in us, then the effusion of ministry upon others.

Thank God such provision is offered in Acts 1:8.—Rev. William H. Neff.

The King's Highway

Tuesday, May 19

Following the Spirit

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Rom. 8:14.

How marvelously glorious! First, to be made holy—then, to be Holy Spirit led! Being thus led, we are no longer slaves to sin to obey its behests. "If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit." To yield our desires, thoughts, and plans to Him continually; to realize Him instinctively as our sufficiency for every thought, word, and deed; to make every temptation, trial, duty, and joy an occasion for prayer and praise; and just to let Him prompt, direct, and control the whole plan of our life as it enfolds moment by moment is to be led of the Spirit.

If we thus follow the Spirit, how will our personal freedom and the naturalness of our rational nature be affected? Free moral agency will not be destroyed, but desirably directed with a perfectly identified personal naturalness that will not operate as two personalities but one—"God working in us to will and to do His good pleasure." Our thinking, acting, and speaking will be with the supreme, glorious freedom to work out His thought and will.—Rev. Quinton Everest.

Wednesday, May 20

Fruit of the Spirit

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Gal. 5:22-23.

Fruit regarded in the light of the orchard, the garden, or the vineyard is the most perfect form of development to which a tree or plant can come. The roots, branches and leaves are servants. The fruit only sits as regent; it is the grand result. The fruit is the measure of the tree's possibility and the purpose for its existence.

The fruit of the Spirit, as we have read it, is sure to be produced in the sanctified heart and evidenced in the life which gives expression to that within.

It preaches the true gospel in a world of hypocrisy and error. It brings to this day a living Christ and sets the realism of His creed and the fullness of His salvation in contrast to the sham and thin veneer of a cheap generation. It reveals the freedom of true value in its superiority above the tyranny of false values in their despotic rule.

As fruit finally culminates in nourishment to the hungry and in reproduction of its kind, so this fruit of the Spirit is desperately needed in our day. It is for us all to produce in our lives day by day. What a privilege is thus ours for this day! Let us bring forth this fruit today, so that at harvest time we can be forever content with its eternal, joyful recompense.—Rev. V. H. Lewis.

Thursday, May 21

Fellowship of the Spirit

"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit." Phil. 2:1.

Fellowship is more than a sentiment; it is a powerful factor in the Christian life. Much

of today's talk about fellowship concerns organic unity, something altogether different from the "fellowship of the Spirit." The type of organic unity which some desire would produce ecclesiastical tyranny, whereas the "fellowship of the Spirit" produces true spiritual unity through the intimate bond of personal participation or sharing of the Spirit which unites Christians.

The "fellowship of the Spirit" means intimate, mutual association on friendly terms with mutual tastes and interest which form a brotherhood characterized by unity of will, affections, designs, endeavors, and matters of judgment on essentials. The true secret of spiritual fellowship is "likemindedness" with the Spirit, or sharing the mind of the Spirit.

In chapter one, Paul urged the Philippians to strive courageously for the faith against all adversaries. Here they are urged to stand unitedly, being knit together by mutual love, avoiding all factions, for they would weaken them, delight their adversaries and break the fellowship of the Spirit. When the Spirit controls the heart of each believer, there can not be factions and divisions, for those who strive for the same ideal cannot be at odds with each other. The Holy Spirit unites all true Christians in their devotion to and labors for Christ and His Church.—Dr. Roy S. Nicholson.

Friday, May 22

Flow of the Spirit

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me, and drink.

"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

"(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" John 7:37-39.

John makes it clear that our Lord's message on the Fullness of the Holy Spirit was both prediction and promise: prediction of a new dispensation and promise for a new personal experience.

Both the prediction and the promise began to be fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2.

The filling of the Spirit is crisis; the flow of the Spirit is process. The "filling" signifies "The Spirit has me—all there is of me." The "flow" signifies "The Spirit is working in me and through me, assimilating more and more to the perfect image of Jesus Christ, employing me with maturing effectiveness in the service of His love."

The flow of the Spirit, as symbolized by the "rivers of living water," means continual purity, for a river not only cleans a stone that is placed in its current but maintains its cleanliness as the stone is left in the current.

It means continual energy, for a river is a thing of power, particularly when it is at flood stage.

It means, moreover, continual humility, for it is characteristic of rivers to seek the lowly places.

A. J. Gordon has put it well:

"O blessed Paraclete,
Assert Thine inward sway;
My body make the temple meet,
For Thy perpetual sway!"

Dr. Paul S. Rees

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