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1

The Starting Point

Reader, are you a B.A.? This little book is only for those who possess that degree from the King's College. If you are not "Born Again," please put it aside, for this is our starting point in considering the fullness of the Spirit as the birthright of every believer. If you have not been born again you have no right by birth to this, the chiefest of New Testament blessings. Your first concern is to become one of the children of God, and then you may inquire as to your inheritance. If you *are* born again, ask that you may read with the anointed eye and with an unprejudiced mind, for the amount of prejudice that exists against this subject is saddening in the extreme.

In nothing that he ever wrote does John Bunyan's masterful genius flash forth more clearly than when, in *The Holy War*, he places that old churl Mr. Prejudice, with sixty deaf men under him, as warder of Eargate. Nothing that even Emmanuel may say can reach Mansoul while Prejudice and his deaf men keep that gate. "There is nothing about this in the Standards of our Church." "I have not met with this truth in my favorite authors." "It is quite new to me, and I never will believe it," etc., etc. These and such like are illustra-

tions one meets with of how well Prejudice keeps his word! In the name of the Lord let us displace him and determine to give what of God's truth may be set forth in the following pages a fair field, no favor being asked for. Deep-rooted prejudice is one of the causes of the appalling spiritual poverty that abounds—yes, appalling when we consider the treasures within our reach.

2

Every Believer's Birthright

On every hand a lack of *something* is being felt and expressed by God's people. Their Christian experience is not what they expected it would be. Instead of expected victory, it is oft-recurring, dreaded defeat; instead of soul satisfaction, it is soul hunger; instead of deep, abiding heart rest, it is disquiet and discontent; instead of advancing, it is losing ground. Is this all Christ meant when He said, "Come unto Me"? Is this life of constant disappointment the normal life of the Bible Christian? To these sad questionings the divine Word answers with an emphatic "No," and the testimony of an ever increasing number of God's children answers "No."

For this widely felt, though sometimes inarticulate demand, the divine supply is the *fullness of the Spirit*; and this fullness is the birthright of *every* believer, his birthright by virtue of his new birth. Sometimes we hear it said that to be filled with the Spirit is the Christian *privilege*; but *birthright* is a stronger word. Reader, it is your birthright to be filled with the Spirit as Peter was filled, as Stephen was filled, as the one hundred and twenty men and women in the upper room were filled (Acts 2:4, 1:14-15), as the men and women in Cornelius's house were filled (Acts 10:44-47). "And ye shall

receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off" (Acts 2:38-39).

What have you done with your birthright? Have you claimed it? *Are you living at this moment in the possession and enjoyment of it?* Or are you, Esau-like, "despising your birthright" (Genesis 25:34)? Or, if not despising, are you neglecting it? Esau's eyes were ultimately opened to his folly in parting with his birthright for "one mess of meat," and he then desired to inherit the blessing, seeking it "diligently with tears"; but alas, his awaking came too late (Hebrews 12:16-17).

May every reader of these lines have the desire graciously awakened (if it has not yet been awakened and satisfied) to inherit his birthright blessing while place of repentance is to be found. May the prediction be fulfilled in our glad experience: "The house of Jacob shall *possess their possessions*" (Obadiah 17).

3

A Command to Be Obeyed

But lest some one should think, "It is optional with me whether I claim my birthright or not; no doubt it would be a very fitting thing for some people to be filled with the Spirit, but *I* need not trouble about it"—in case anyone should be tempted to speak and act like this, let us learn that "Be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18) is a command to be obeyed, a duty to be done. Many of God's people are acknowledging that they did not know that "Be filled with the Spirit" was a command; *but it is*, and there is no excuse for not knowing.

You will notice that in Ephesians 5:18 there is a double command, a negative, "Be not drunk," and a positive, "Be ye filled." The positive command is as authoritative as the negative and was binding on *just as many* of those Ephesian Christians as was the negative command. Now what was true for those believers there in Ephesus in the long ago is equally true for all believers on God's footstool today.

Is it a sin for a believer today to disobey the command "Be not drunk," and is it then a virtue to disobey the equally authoritative command "Be ye filled"? If it is a sin for a Christian to be drunk, it is just as surely, truly, really, a *sin* not to be filled. We are commanded and

expected to live a Spirit-filled life, to be filled, not with wine, the fruit of the vines of earth, but with the new wine of the kingdom, the fruit of the "true Vine."

Reader, if you are asked, Do you obey the command "Be not drunk with wine," what is your answer? If it is "Yes," that is obedience. Now, if you are asked, Do you obey the command "Be filled with the Spirit," what is your answer? If it is "No," that is disobedience; you are guilty of breaking one of God's plainest commandments. You have no more license to break *this* command than you have to break any command in the Decalogue. Before you read further, had you not better confess your sin and tell the Master that you purpose in your heart new obedience?

4

Something Different from the New Birth

This being "filled with the Spirit" is a definite blessing, quite distinct from being "born of the Spirit." Some would object to this and reply that every Christian has the Spirit; quite true, for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:9); and "no man can say Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3); but to "have the Spirit" and to be "filled with the Spirit" are two different things. "Egypt always has the Nile," as someone has said, "but Egypt waits every year for its overflow"; having the Nile is one thing, but having the Nile overflowing is quite another. Now it is the Nile's overflow that is Egypt's salvation, and to overflow it must first be filled. So it is the Christian's overflow that is the world's salvation, and in order to have the overflow there must first be the filling.

As far as God is concerned, there is no reason why this filling should not take place at the hour of conversion, of the new birth. See the case of Cornelius and his friends, in Acts 10:44-48. They believed, were saved, "received the Holy Ghost," and were baptized with water the same day. But it were a fatal blunder to assert that *all* men on believing received the Holy Ghost in a

similar manner or were thus filled with the Spirit. Most certainly in Bible times it was not so.

THE APOSTLES

In Acts 2:4 we read, "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit," all in the upper room, men and women, including the twelve apostles. Now these men had the Spirit before. When Christ called them to follow Him, when they were converted, they received the Spirit. After His resurrection, but before His ascension, Christ breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20:22), and of course they did "receive" the Spirit then; but it is never said of them that they were "filled with the Holy Spirit" till that morning in the upper room, for the simple reason that it could not be said of them, for "the Spirit was not yet given" (John 7:39). Yet these men were Christians before that morning.

THE SAMARITANS

In Acts 8:5-13 we find that under the preaching of Philip the evangelist there was a work of grace in the city of Samaria, the people believed and were baptized. These people, then, were Christians, but they were not "filled with the Spirit" till Peter and John came down and prayed for them, thus perfecting the work Philip had been doing (Acts 8:15-17).

THE APOSTLE PAUL

Saul was converted when the omnipotent, omnipresent

Christ, standing as Picket-guard for that little church at Damascus, unhorsed him and took him prisoner on the Damascus road. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" That question sounds like conversion, surely. For three days he lay in darkness in Damascus, a surrendered, believing man, and therefore a Christian man; but it was not till Ananias came to him that he was "filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 9:17). And who was this Ananias through whom this man Saul, destined to prove himself the truest, bravest, grandest servant the Lord Jesus ever had—through whom even Saul received the greatest of the New Testament blessings? He was an obscure, obedient believer of whom we know nothing else than that he did this service for Saul. Here is the ministry of the saints. So it may be today, some big Paul may be blessed through the ministry of some little Ananias.

THE EPHESIANS IN ACTS 19:1-6

Here were twelve men who were disciples, they had been believers for some time when Paul found them; in other words, they were saved, they were Christians. But Paul's first question to them was "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" Plainly showing that Paul thought it possible for them to have been believers and yet *not* to have received the Holy Ghost. Indeed, in this case, what Paul deemed a possibility turned out to be a fact; they had *not yet* "received" the Spirit.

Of course, in a *certain* sense, they had the Spirit; it was by the Spirit they had believed, and if they had not the Spirit of Christ, they were none of His; but for all that, they had not yet "received" the Spirit in the Pente-

costal sense of the word, in the sense in which Paul meant it. They had not yet come to *their* Pentecost. In the *Revised Version*, Paul's question is rendered, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" proving (1) that it is possible to "receive" the Holy Ghost at the moment of believing, and (2) that it is possible to believe without "receiving," as has already been pointed out from the rendering of the Authorized Version. After Paul had instructed them more fully in the word and way of the Lord, we read that "the Holy Ghost came on them." From this we gather that these men of Ephesus obtained a blessing subsequent to their conversion, spoken of here as "receiving" the Holy Ghost, as the Holy Ghost "coming" on them. This is in strict accord with what Paul himself says of this event when writing to the Ephesians in Ephesians 1:13, "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." First, they "believed," and then, some time after "believing," they were "sealed," they "received," they were "filled."

From these four cases—(1) apostles, (2) Samaritans, (3) Saul, (4) Ephesians—we conclude that in New Testament times men actually lived as Christians, were saved, converted men, and yet knew nothing of the "filling" with the Spirit—this knowledge, this blessing coming to them some time after their being born again. Yet this is the very thing some today deny! Whom are we to believe? These objectors or the sacred Record? The divine Word declares it, and there is then no room or need for argument. So we affirm that it is equally possible for believers, for saved, converted men, to live in our own time, as well as in Bible times, without the "fullness"; nay more, it is possible for them to live for

years, then die and go home to heaven to be there forever with the Lord; and to have known nothing on earth of what it was to be "filled with the Spirit." But what a loss they have suffered! Eternal, irreparable loss!

So we conclude it is abundantly plain from Scripture that for the regenerate soul there is in Christ another blessing over and above the being born of the Spirit, spoken of as "the fullness of the Spirit." "I am amazed at a man like you going to these conventions," said a man to his minister once. "What new thing can these convention speakers tell you? It is all in the New Testament." "Yes," he replied, "that's the trouble; and we have left these things in the New Testament; whereas we want to get them out of the New Testament and into our hearts and lives."

In Jesus Christ, God's Treasury, our share of Pentecost's blessing has been deposited for each of us by our Father God. Have we claimed and received our share? Not likely, if we are not aware that there *is* such a blessing for us; but once we recognize the fact that it is there, we surely will not rest till we have made it our own. The Scottish bankers have published the fact that they have lying in their vaults a sum of 40,000,000 pounds in unclaimed deposits. Some of those who owned a share of this money may have died in the workhouse; some of them may be living to this moment in direst need, and they might have their money for the claiming; but they do not know that it is theirs. What vast unclaimed deposits are lying in God's Treasury, Christ! Some of His people have died spiritually poor; some are living today in spiritual penury, a hand-to-mouth existence, with such "untrackable riches" lying "at call," on deposit in their name. What have we done with *our* deposit? We are

responsible for its use and disuse. Remember the reckoning day is coming (Matthew 25:19).