

“THE BAPTISM, WITNESS AND SEAL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT”

(Discourse by R. E. Streeter, 1916 Convention Report, start on P. 92.)

The subject assigned to us is not that of unfolding what the Holy Spirit is; that was the task of the speaker preceding me. You will recall that he gave the definition of the Holy Spirit, as it has to do with our subject, to be—the holy mind, disposition, power or influence of God. We understand that this is the correct definition, and without occupying any time allotted to us in proving this, we will come directly to the task appointed us, namely, that of explaining what is meant, by the baptism, witness and seal of the Holy Spirit.

The great importance of our subject is evidenced in many ways. It is seen in the fact that the possession of this Holy Spirit more and more is the greatest of all desires of true Christians. This desire is expressed in prayer. It will have been noticed that when prayer is offered up, whether when in the assembly of God’s people or in private, while not always expressed in the same way, it is that more and more of this Holy Spirit—holy mind, disposition or power of God, be granted. Indeed, this aspiration is begotten in all true disciples of Christ, at the very beginning of the Christian life. All of Christ’s followers desire above everything else, that they may be God-like, Christ-like in all their thoughts, words and actions, and they know, that, the more they possess of his holy mind, disposition and power of God, will their desire be realized.

The outpouring of this Holy Spirit was distinctly foretold by the holy prophets of the Jewish Age. It has for its object the accomplishment of a definite purpose in the unfolding of God’s plans for humanity. This purpose is expressed in various ways in the Scriptures. One of these is the call, consecration and development of a company of kings and priests, who are to live and reign with Christ, as associates in his kingdom in the great work of blessing and uplifting all the families of the earth. (Rev. 20:4.) This company of kings and priests are to experience a change of nature from human to divine. (2 Pet. 1:4.) The outpouring of this Holy Spirit upon Christ was foretold in Isa. 42:1, and reads: “Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect in whom My soul delighteth; *I have put my spirit upon him*, he shall bring forth judgment unto the Gentiles.” Again it is foretold that the same Holy Spirit was to be given to Christ’s followers. We read concerning this: “And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids of those days [the Gospel Age days] will I pour out of my spirit.” (Joel 2:29.)

Again in the same prophecy we have a statement that it would afterwards be poured out upon all flesh. We quote: “And it shall come to pass afterwards, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.” (Joel 2:30.) This latter general outpouring will take place in the Millennial Age, the age to follow this, when Christ will reign with his saints over all the

human race, for the purpose of uplifting them from sin and degradation to holiness and human perfection. Our subject, however, has to do wholly with this Gospel Age.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, refer to one and the same thing. It was foretold by John the Baptist: He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 3:11.) Christ referred to the same when he said to his disciples: "Behold I send the promise of my Father upon you, but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." (Luke 24:49.) The outpouring of this Holy Spirit was most beautifully pictured in the anointing of Aaron, the high priest. We read that the holy anointing oil, symbol of the Holy Spirit, was poured upon Aaron's head, representing Christ, and it flowed down his beard even to the skirts of his garments, representing the Church, the Body of Christ of this Gospel Age. (Lev. 8; Psalm 133:2.)

The invitation to become members of this holy, under-priesthood was first extended to the Jewish believers of Christ's day. God's order, in the bestowment of his favors is "the Jew first." It was foreseen and foretold that the Jewish people as a whole would fail to appreciate this exalted privilege, indeed that only a few would do so and accept it. It was because of this that the invitation was given to the Gentiles, and this has been the object of gospel preaching in this present age, to fill up the elect number. The Scriptures declare that there is only one baptism of the Holy Spirit, although we may properly say that it was in three parts: first upon Christ the Head (Matt. 3:16); second, upon Jewish believers at Pentecost (Acts 2:4); and third, upon Gentile believers, Cornelius, a Roman centurion and his household being the first from these. (Acts 10:44.)

It therefore seems plain that as there is only one baptism one outpouring, it would be out of harmony with God's arrangement, for believers to pray or seek for frequent baptisms. It is proper, however, for those who have received the Holy Spirit to pray for more and more of it, indeed, to be filled with it. However, while there is but one baptism of the Spirit, the one that came at the beginning of the Gospel Age, all individual believers, footstep followers of Christ, throughout the Gospel Age, receive of this one baptism, this one outpouring.

This brings us to the consideration of the witnesses of the holy spirit. How may we know that we have received it? What are the evidences of this? We are sure that we can not trust to our feelings as an evidence, a witness, for these are unreliable; they come and go, like vapor. There is only one sure and safe evidence, and that is the word of God. That word declares that the Holy Spirit is given to those who receive Christ (the Christ of the Bible) as Savior and Lord. We read: "As many as received him to them gave He the power [privilege] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." (John 1:12.) Again we read: "By this he spake of the spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." (John 7:39.) We quote one more: "Received ye the spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. 3:2.) In conformity with the word, I

ask, have I ever in the past received Christ as my Saviour from the condemnation of sin? Did I at that time or since, yield up my will fully to him; in other words, accept him as my Lord, my head in all things? If I can answer yes, and can say that, now at this present moment I am trusting in him as Saviour, and still take him to be my Lord; I have the initial or begetted evidences that I have received the Holy Spirit. Another way of expressing how the Spirit is received is described by the apostle Paul as that of being baptized into Christ's death, which simply means, that after having believed in Christ as a Saviour, I give up my human will and accept the divine will in its place. Faith in Christ as a Saviour followed by consecration to death of the old human will, brings a release from the Adamic condemnation of death. To be baptized into his death, begins with the death of the human will, and ends in a literal dying with Christ, dying the same kind of a death that he died—a sacrificial one. As one has said "The death of Christ is not complete until every member of His Body has gone down into death." Likewise it is also true that, the resurrection of the Christ is not complete until every member of his, Body is raised up from death. If I have ever made such a consecration and am now striving by his help to carry it out, I may be sure that I have the Holy Spirit.

Accompanying such a definite conversion and consecration there are certain other evidences which belong to the initial, the begettal experiences of this "newness of life." One of these is a laying aside of sin, and hungering for the word of God, as we read, "Laying aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisies, and envies and evil speaking, as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." (1 Pet. 2:1, 2.) Another evidence that belongs to the beginning of the new life, in some measure, is a new love for those who have experienced a like change. Referring to this, the apostle John writes: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." (1 John 3:14.) These evidences will be possessed by all those who have received of this outpouring or baptism of the Holy Spirit.

In addition to these, however, the Christian believer will soon begin to experience other evidences, which may properly be named, quickening evidences. One of these is referred to by the apostle in Rom. 8:11: "If the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, the spirit of him that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies." This seems to teach that the begettal evidences will soon be followed by an energizing of the believer to service for the Lord. The beginning of this service will be that of confessing Christ as Savior and Lord to others, as opportunity affords. Concerning this we read: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10:9, 10.)

This open confession of discipleship, will, to a greater or less extent, bring persecution, perhaps in the form of ridicule, ostracism, etc. However, when Christian disciples persist in a determination to be true and loyal to Christ, it is most always the case, that worldly people will let them alone. It is then that the persecution will come for another source, even from those who profess Christianity, but do not possess the power of godliness, the Holy Spirit. This comes usually through testifying against the erroneous doctrines prevalent and the worldly spirit of these professors. The Scriptures bear witness that this will be an experience of believers who are quickened as we read: “They that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye.” (2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:14.)

Another evidence or witness of the spirit is, that of chastening. The great object to be attained by the gift of the Holy Spirit, is a development into the character likeness of Christ; and as in the natural world fathers see the necessity of chastening their children for their good, so our Heavenly Father, infinitely more wise sees the necessity of chastening, correcting his children. This chastening comes to a greater or less extent to all of God’s children. It is administered in various ways. It may come through earthly losses, as of friends, or worldly possessions. It is designed to remind us that as we have been begotten to heavenly hopes, we are to cultivate the habit of setting our affections on things above, and also to wean us from the things of earth. (Col. 3:1, 2.) It is designed also to discover to us our imperfections, perhaps some we may have been unconscious of before, in order that we might seek diligently to correct them. Some of the Lord’s children have to be chastened or, punished severely, to break down the stubborn will. Others need only to have the Lord through His word speak to them, and they give heed immediately and obey, just as it is with some children in the natural family. We are quite sure that this latter class will be of the “more than conquerors.” The apostle tells us “whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every soul whom He receiveth.” If we endure chastening, then are we His sons. We are further told that “no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous, but afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised aright, thereby.” (Heb. 12:5-11.)

Another evidence of the quickening work of the Holy Spirit is, sometimes to have our names cast out as evil, to be evilly spoken against, false, for Christ’s sake. The Savior referring to this tells his followers: “Woe to you when all men speak well of you.” (Luke 6:26.) This kind of evidence is common to those who take their stand against the prevailing erroneous teaching of the creeds of Christendom, as it is the special duty of disciples to do in the present harvest time of the age. It comes not necessarily through a verbal testimony against, but always when obeying the divine command to come out of Babylon, the symbolic name for Christendom in its various organizations. (Rev. 18:1-4.)

A very precious evidence that we are being quickened by the Holy Spirit is that of being given increased light concerning God’s wonderful plan as contained in the Scriptures, and

a love not only for the milk of the word, but the strong meat also. We read, that “strong meat belongeth unto them who are of full age even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil.” (Heb. 5:14.)

We now proceed to consider what is meant by the sealing of the Holy Spirit. We call attention to two passages of Scripture that tell us what is meant by this sealing. The first is found in 2 Tim. 2:19 and reads: “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, the Lord knoweth them that are His, and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” We are in this Scripture informed that this sealing with the Holy Spirit impresses two marks or characteristics upon the sealed ones. These marks are ownership and holiness. This means that God gives his Holy Spirit to those who acknowledge that they are not their own, that they have been bought with a price, and that they belong to Him. Those who receive this divine seal give many evidences to this fact, one of these, stated in this text, is that they turn away from all iniquity and seek to purify themselves.

Another, and perhaps a more comprehensive and striking explanation of what is meant by this sealing with the Holy Spirit is found in Rev. 14:1 and reads: “And I looked and lo a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four-thousand, having his *Father’s name written in their foreheads.*” In Scripture, a name stands for character; therefore to have the Father’s name written in the forehead is a symbolic expression of character likeness, or likeness to God, the Father.

This sealing begins when the Holy Spirit is received. It continues or progresses as the believer makes use of the God-appointed helps and agencies to this end. These are His word, appropriating faith in that word; fellowshiping with those of kindred minds; dependence upon Him for grace to help in every time of need; submission to His will and providences, being fully assured that all things work together for good to the called according to his purpose; a cultivating of the spirit of watchfulness and prayer in all things and at all times.

This sealing must reach completion in the present life, and while this is not a flesh perfection, it has its certain marks or characteristics. We will note a few Scriptures that describe some of those. We read in 1 Pet. 5:9, 10: “May the God of all grace who hath called us to his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, after that ye have suffered awhile make you perfect, *establish, strengthen, settle you.*” This seems to refer to an experimental knowledge of the foundation truths upon which the consecrated life rests, and that trust and confidence in God’s promises, and providences that entitles one to stand firm at all times. Again we learn that the apostle Paul when he was exhorting the elders of the Church at Ephesus, expresses himself as having reached such a fixity of character that nothing could move or swerve him from his determination to finish his course with joy. We read: “And now I go bound unto Jerusalem, not knowing what shall befall me there, save that the Holy Spirit witnesses that bonds and afflictions abide me. *But none of these*

things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Acts 20:22-24.

Again as expressing his full submission to the divine will and providence we have him saying in Phil. 4:12: “I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content.” Still further, as expressing himself *as having learned* to make use of all the varied experiences connected with the divine providence, for his own strengthening, we have him saying: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” (Phil. 4:13.)

In closing, we desire to quote from that wonderful unfolding of this subject, by our pastor, found in Vol. V, page 247: “This seal of covenant relationship, of sonship and heirship, is not an outward sign upon our foreheads; nor is it a mark or manifestation of God’s favor in earthly affairs, in worldly prosperity; nor is it now, nor was it ever, the ‘gifts’ of healing, or of speaking with tongues, etc., for many who possessed these miraculous ‘gifts’ lacked the seal and witness of the Spirit. Acts 8:13-13; 1 Cor. 18:1-3

“The seal or pledge of the holy Spirit is in the heart of the sealed, and hence it is that no man knoweth it save he that receiveth it (Rev. 3:17), except as others may see the fruits of it in his daily life: ‘He who establishes us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.’ 1 Cor. 1:21, 22

“This earnest or seal of sonship is the Spirit of love which is at-one with the Father and all his holy arrangements, crying out, Abba, Father; I delight to do thy will, O my God. He who has this seal or mark of sonship is he who not only seeks to do the will of the Father, but in doing it finds it ‘not grievous’, but delightsome. 1 John 5:3

“The Spirit of adoption or sealing as sons, the possession of the first-fruits or earnest of the coming inheritance, is, then, one of the most advanced ‘witnesses’ of the Spirit—the very cream of Christian experiences in the present life. Before attaining this stage of experience, we must receive our share of the *anointing* by coming into the anointed body of Christ, the Church, by being *begotten* of the Spirit of Truth unto sanctification of our spirits to know and to do of the Lord’s will. This experience comes, after we have been *quicken*ed of the Spirit to the service of righteousness: it is an evidence, so to speak, that we have passed from the embryo condition to one in which God can consider us sons and seal us as such.

“As all believers should seek to come under the anointing and begetting influence of the holy Spirit of God, the Spirit of Truth—so all who have been thus begotten of the Spirit to sonship should seek to attain that position of fullness of harmony with the Father that He can acknowledge and seal. And having attained that position, let all be careful not to mar or blur the seal—not to quench or extinguish this precious treasure—not to turn this

spirit of love and joy in the holy Spirit of fellowship and communion into a spirit of heaviness, darkness, grief. Not to spoil this seal, but to keep it ever bright and fresh, should be the constant effort of all who receive it.”