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Obtaining The Full Blessing Of Pentecost

By Andrew Murray From The Full Blessing Of Pentecost

Jesus said: "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth" (John 14:15-17). Let us see how the blessing of Pentecost was for the first time given from heaven. What was the disposition of heart that fitted the disciples for receiving the Spirit? Then we shall know for all coming time what remains to be done by ourselves to enjoy the same blessing. The first disciples serve us as examples and forerunners on the way to the fullness of the Spirit. What was there in them which enabled them to become the recipients of these heavenly gifts and made them fit objects of the unspeakable grace that in them first of all the Three-One God came to take up His abode? The right answer to this question will help us not a little on the way to be filled with the Holy Spirit. What do we find in these first disciples?

In the first place, there is the fact that they were deeply attached to the Lord Jesus.

The Son of God came into the world in order to unite the divine life which He had with the Father with the life of man, and thus to secure that the life of God should penetrate into the life of the creature. When He had completed the work in His own person by His obedience, and death, and resurrection, He was exalted to the throne of God on high. This was in order that in spiritual power in the might of the all-penetrating sovereign presence of God, His disciples and His Church might participate in His very own life.

We read that the Holy Spirit "was not yet given" because Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:39). It was only after His glorification that the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of Godhead, united with manhood. Only then could the Spirit of the complete indwelling of God in man be given. It is the Spirit of the glorified Jesus that the disciples received on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit of the Head, penetrating all the members of His body. It is evident without proof that if the fullness of the Spirit thus dwells in Jesus, a personal relationship to Him is the first condition for the reception of the full gift of the Comforter. It was to attain this end that the Lord Jesus throughout all His three years' work on earth kept the disciples in such close converse with Himself. He desired to attach them to Himself. He wanted them to feel themselves truly one with Him. He wanted them to identify themselves with Him as far as this was possible. By knowledge and fellowship, by love and obedience, they became inwardly knit to Him. This was the preparation for participating in the Spirit of His glorification.

The lesson that is here taught us is indeed extremely simple, but it is one of profound significance. There are not a few Christians who believe in the Lord and are very zealous in His service, who eagerly desire to become holy and who yet do not succeed in their

endeavor. It seems oftentimes as if they could not understand the promise of the Spirit. The thought of being filled with the Spirit exercises but little influence upon them. The reason is obvious. There is lacking in their religion that personal relationship to the Lord Jesus. They have not that inward attachment to Him, that perfectly natural reference to Him as the best and nearest Friend, as the beloved Lord, which was so characteristic of the disciples. This, however, is absolutely indispensable. It is a heart that is entirely occupied with the Lord Jesus, and depends only upon Him that can alone hope for the fullness of the Spirit.

They had left all for Jesus.

"Nothing for nothing." This proverb contains a deep truth. A thing that costs me nothing may nevertheless cost me much. It may bring me under an obligation to the giver, and so cost me more than it is worth. I may have so much trouble in appropriating it and keeping it that I may pay much more for it than the price which should be asked for it. "Nothing for nothing": the maxim holds good also in the life of the kingdom of heaven. The parables of the Pearl of great price and the Treasure hid in the field (Matt. 13:44-45) teach us that in order to obtain possession of the kingdom within us, we must sell all that we have. This is the very renunciation that Jesus literally demanded of the disciples who followed Him. This is the requirement He so often repeated in His preaching: "He that forsaketh not all that he hath cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33). The two worlds betwixt which we stand are in such direct conflict with one another, and the world in which we by nature live exercises such a mighty influence over us that it is often necessary for us, even by external and visible sacrifice, to withdraw from it. It was thus that Jesus trained His disciples to long for that which is heavenly. Only thus could He prepare them to desire and receive the heavenly gift with an undivided heart.

The Lord has left us no outward directions as to how much of the world we are to abandon or in what manner. But by His whole Word He teaches us that without sacrifice, without a deliberate separation from the world and forsaking of it, we shall never make much progress in grace. The spirit of this world has penetrated so deeply into us that we do not observe it. We share in its desire for comfort and enjoyment, for self-pleasing and self-exaltation, without our knowing how impossible these things make it for us to be filled with the Spirit. Let us learn from the early disciples that to be filled from the heavenly world with the Spirit that dwells there, we must be separate from the children of this world or from worldly Christians. We must be ready and eager to live as entirely different men, who literally represent heaven upon earth, because we have received the Spirit of the King of heaven.

They had despaired utterly of themselves and all that is of man.

Man has two great enemies by whom the devil tempts him and with whom he has to contend. The one is the world without; the other is the self-life within. This last, the selfish ego, is much more dangerous and stronger than the first. It is quite possible for a man to have made much progress in forsaking the world while the self-life retains full dominion within him. You see this fact illustrated in the case of the disciples. Peter could say with

truth: "Lo, we have left all, and have followed Thee" (Mark 10:28). Yet how manifestly did the selfish ego, with its self-pleasing and its self-confidence, still retain its full sway over him. As the Lord at their first calling led them up to the point of forsaking their outward possessions and following Him, so shortly afterwards He began to teach them that a disciple must deny himself and lose his own life if he would be worthy of receiving His. He must hate not only father and mother, where this was necessary, but even his own life. It was love for this self-life more than all love for father and mother that hindered the Lord Jesus from doing His work in the heart. It was to cost them more to be redeemed from the selfish ego within them than to give up the world around them. The self-life is the natural life of sinful man. He can be liberated from it by nothing save by death – that is, by first dying to it and then living in the strength of the new life that comes from God.

The forsaking of the world began at the outset of the three years' discipleship. It was at the end of that period, at the cross of Jesus, that dying to the self-life first took place. When they saw Him die, they learned to despair of themselves and of everything on which they had hitherto based their hope. Whether they thought of their Lord and the redemption which they had expected, or whether they thought of themselves and their shameful unfaithfulness toward Him, everything tended to fill them with despair. Little did they know that was to prove the breaking up of their hard hearts – the mortification of the self-life and of confidence in themselves – which would enable them to receive something entirely new – namely, a divine life through the Spirit of the glorified Jesus in the innermost depths of their souls. Oh, that we understood better that there is nothing which so hampers us as secret reliance on something in ourselves or in the Church around us which we imagine can help us! On the other hand, there is nothing that brings so much blessing as entire despair of ourselves and of all that is upon the earth, in the way of teaching us to turn our hearts only and wholly to heaven and to partake of the heavenly gift which comes thence.

They received and held fast the promise of the Spirit given by the Lord Jesus.

In His farewell address on the last night of His sojourn on earth, Jesus comforted His disciples in their sorrow over His departure with one great promise – namely, the mission of the Holy Spirit from heaven. This was to be better than His own bodily presence among them. It would be to them the full fruit and power of His redemption. The divine life – yea, He Himself, with the Father – was to make abode within them. The unheard-of wonder, the mystery of the ages, was to be their portion. They were to know that they were in Him and He in them. At His ascension from the Mount of Olives, this promise of the Spirit was the subject of the last words He addressed to them. It is evident that the disciples had still but little idea of what this promise signified. But however defective their understanding of it was, they held it fast; or rather, the promise held them fast and would not let them go. They all had only one thought: something has been promised to us by our Lord; it will give us a share in His heavenly power and glory; we know for certain that it is coming. Of what the thing itself was or of what their experience of it was to be, they could give no account. It was enough for them that they had the Word of the Lord. He would make it a blessed reality within them.

It is just the same disposition that we have so much need of now. To us also, even as to them, has the Word of the Lord come concerning the Spirit who is to descend from the throne in the power of His glorified life. "He that believeth in Me...out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38). For us also it is the one thing needful to hold fast that word; to set our whole desire upon the fulfillment of it; to lay aside all else until we inherit the promise. The word from the mouth of Jesus concerning the reception of the Spirit in such measure that we shall be endued with power from on high must animate and fill us with strong desire, with firm and joyful assurance.

They waited upon the Father until the performance of the promise came and they were filled with the Spirit.

The ten days of waiting were for them days in which they were continually in the Temple "praising and blessing God" and "with one accord in prayer and supplication" (see Acts 1:14). It is not enough for us to endeavor to strengthen desire and to hold fast our confidence. The principal thing is to set ourselves in close and abiding contact with God. The blessing must come from God; God Himself must give it to us; we are to receive the gift directly from Him. What is promised us is a wonderful work of divine omnipotence and love. What we desire is the personal occupancy and indwelling of God the Holy Spirit. God Himself must bestow this personally upon us. A man gives another a piece of bread or a piece of money. He gives it away from himself and has nothing further to do with it. It is not thus with God's gift of the Holy Spirit. No: the Spirit is God. God is in the Spirit who comes to us, even as He was in the Son. The gift of the Spirit is the most personal act of the Godhead: it is the gift of Himself unto us. We have to receive it in the very closest personal contact with God.

The clearer the insight we obtain into this principle, the more deeply shall we feel how little we can do to grasp the blessing by our own desiring, or endeavoring or believing. All our desiring, and striving and believing can only issue in a more complete acknowledgment that we ourselves can do nothing to win the boon. It is the goodness of God alone that must give it. It is His omnipotence that must work it in us. Our disposition must be one of silent assurance that the Father desires to give it to us; that He will not keep us waiting one moment longer than is absolutely necessary; and that there shall not be a single soul which persists in waiting in the pathway of self-abnegation and dependence that shall not be filled with the glory of God. Every tree continues always to grow from the root out of which it first sprang. The day of Pentecost was the planting of the Christian Church, and the Holy Spirit became the power of its life. Let us turn back to that experience. There is our power still. We learn from the disciples what is really necessary. Attachment to Jesus, the abandonment of everything in the world for Him, despair of self and of all help from man, holding on to the word of promise, and then waiting on God, "the living God" – this is the sure way of living in the joy and the power of the Holy Spirit.