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CHAPTER 10: THE HOLY GHOST

LUKE 24:49 – *"And, 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."*

ACTS 1:8 – *"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."*

FRIENDS who were present at former services will remember our line of thought, without my stopping to recapitulate. My chief reason for taking up this subject again, after having preached four sermons on it, is to meet the difficulties of some whom I believe to be anxious and honest inquirers. Taking those who have written and spoken to me as representatives of a class, it occurred to me that there might be many others in a similar state of mind, and it is a great joy to me if the Lord uses me to meet real difficulties, and to help those who are exercised by them into a higher state of grace, and a more thorough and complete devotion to the Lord. This is my end—God is my witness—in every service.

Now, I do not want to make any reflections, and will not do so any further than I can help; but in dealing with such a subject we cannot avoid this, to a certain extent, as I have said before; if the truth reveals error, and if trying to get into a better track necessarily in some measure reflects on the old track—we cannot help it, and we must not eschew the former for the latter. It must be manifest, I think, to every spiritual and thoughtful Christian that there is a great want somewhere in connection with the preaching of the Gospel, and the instrumentalities of the church at large. That there are many blessed exceptions I joyfully and gladly admit. No one hails them with greater gladness than I do. That there are blessed green spots here and there in the wilderness is quite true, and when these are gathered together and descanted on in articles, they look very nice, and we are apt to take the flattering unction to our souls that things are not so bad after all; but, when we come to travel the country over and find how few and far between these green spots are, and hear what a tide of lamentation and mourning reaches us all round the land as to the deadness, coldness, and dearth of Christian churches, we cannot help feeling that there is a GREAT WANT SOMEWHERE! This is not only my opinion, but it is almost universally admitted, that, with the enormous expenditure of means, the great amount of human effort, the multiplication of instrumentalities during the past century, there has not been a corresponding result.



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People say to me, on every hand, we have meetings without number, services, societies, conventions, conferences, but what comes of them all, comparatively? And I may just say here that numbers of ministers and clergymen, in private conversation, admit the same thing. In fact, none are more ready to admit this comparative lack of results than many dear spiritual ministers. They say, when talking with us behind the scenes, 'Yes, it is a sad fact. I think I preach the truth. I pray about it. I am anxious for results, but alas! alas!

The conversions are but few and far between.' And then, not only are those conversions few, but in the mass of instances superficial—we should expect from such a putting of the truth as that we have been reading about, numerous and continual turnings to the Lord as in those days—we should expect men coming out openly from sin and from God-dishonouring courses, businesses, and professions, coming out from fashionable and worldly circles, abjuring the world, and literally and absolutely following the Christ as in those days. That is what we have a right to expect, and yet how comparatively rare they are, so that when people do this, there is quite a commotion, and it is talked about all over the land. Now I say this is universally admitted, and it behoves us to ask before God and with an earnest heart-yearning, desiring to improve this state of things. Where is the lack, what is the want?

Now note, secondly, this want is not the truth. Oh! what a great deal of talk we have about the truth, and not any too much. I would not yield to any man or woman in this audience in my love for this Bible. I love this Word and regard it as the standard of all faith and practice, and our guide to live by; but it is not enough of itself. The great want is not the truth, for you see facts would contradict this theory. If it were the truth, then there would be no lack at this day, compared with other times, because we never had so much of the truth. There never was so much preaching of the truth, or such a wide dissemination of the Word of God, yet, comparatively, where are the results?

Further, not only as to quantity, but as to quality am I discouraged. Not only are there comparatively few conversions, but a great many of these are of a questionable kind. We should not only ask—are people converted, but what are they converted to? What SORT OF SAINTS ARE THEY?

Because, I contend, you had far better let a man alone in sin than give him a sham conversion, and make him believe he is a Christian when he is nothing of the kind. So you see we must look after the quality as well as the quantity, and I fear, we have an awful amount of spurious production, and it behoves us—and I will, for one, if I were to be crucified for it tomorrow—be true to what the Spirit of



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God has taught me on this point, I will never pander to things as they are for fear of the persecution which follows trying to put them right. God forbid!

Then, I say, the lack is not truth. There will be thousands of sermons preached today—the truth, and nothing but the truth. Nobody will pretend to say they were not in perfect keeping with the Word of God; and yet they will be perfect failures, and nobody will know it better than they who preach them! These are facts.

I was talking, on this point, a while ago, with a good man, who said, 'Ah! yes, I have not seen a conversion in my church for these two years.' Now, what was the reason? There was a reason, and I am afraid many might say the same. Yet there are the unconverted. They come to be operated upon. Take a church where there is a congregation of, say 800 or 1,000, suppose with a membership of 200 or 300. What becomes of the 500 or 700 unbelievers, who come and go, Sunday after Sunday, like a door on its hinges, neither the better nor worse? Nay, God grant it might be so, but they are worse. They get enough light to light them down to damnation, but they do not get enough power to lift them into salvation. What IS THE MATTER? There must be something wrong. Will you account for it. It ought to be accounted for! It ought not so to be. God is not changed. Surely He is as anxious for the salvation of men now as He ever was. Human hearts are not changed; they are neither better nor worse; they are depraved, vile, devilish just the same. The Gospel is exactly the same power it ever was, rightly experienced, lived, and preached. It is still the power of God unto salvation. Then what is the matter? The truth is preached. The people hear it, and yet they remain as they were. Where is the lack?

Now, I say, and I most unhesitatingly assert, that the great want is POWER—this power of which we have been reading.

And I want to remark, thirdly, that this power is as distinct, and definite, and separate, a gift of God, as was this Book, as was the Son or any other gift which He has given us.

It is distinctly recognized, not only in our texts, but, as we read to you again and again, as a distinct and definite gift accompanying the efforts of those who live on the conditions on which God can give it to them. We cannot explain this gift, but it is the power of the Holy Spirit of God in the soul of the speaker accompanying His word, making it cut and pierce to the dividing asunder soul and spirit. "You shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." "Until you be endued



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with," not the truth, not faith (they had faith before that), but, "power;" and, as He says in another place, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." Though they may stone you, as they did Stephen, they shall be cut to the heart, and made to feel the power of your testimony.

Now, I find people who go to work, which is all right, because the power comes to us in obedient faith; but they go trusting in their own efforts. They are without this endowment of power, and they see no result. The work is a comparative failure. Oh! what numbers of people have come to me who have been at work in different directions, in churches, as ministers, elders, deacons, leaders, Sabbath-school teachers, tract distributors, and the like, confessing that they had been working for more or less lengthened periods, and had seen comparatively little result. They say, 'Do you think this is right? Do you think I ought to go on?' Go on, assuredly, but not in the same track. Go on, most decidedly, but seek a fresh inspiration. There is something wrong, or you would have seen some fruit of your labour—not all the fruit. God does not give to any of us to see it all; but we do see enough to assure us that the Holy Ghost is accompanying our testimony. God's people have always done that when they have worked in conformity with the conditions on which the power can be given.

Now, this is how I account for the want of results—the want of the direct, pungent, enlightening, convicting, restoring, transforming power of the Holy Ghost; and I care not how gigantic the intellect of the agent, or how equipped from the school of human learning. I would rather have a Hallelujah Lass, a little child, with the power of the Holy Ghost, hardly able to put two sentences of the Queen's English together, to come to help, bless, and benefit my soul, than I would have the most learned divine in the kingdom without it, for it is "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit," Oh! that you would learn it. When you have learnt that, you will be made: when you experience it, you will lay hold on God. It is not by might, any kind of might, might of intellect, or learning, or eloquence, or position, or influence; it is not by might, nor by power—man's power—of any sort, but by My Spirit. That is as true as it ever was, **HERE IS THE SECRET OF THE CHURCH'S FAILURE!** She is like Israel of old. She hath multiplied her defended cities and her palaces, but she hath forgotten the God of Israel, in whom her strength is. If you will read the history of the church from the beginning you will find that true which I say, that just to the degree that the church has increased in the material she has decreased in the spiritual. I do not say it ought to be so; I do not say that is a necessity. I only give you a significant fact that it has been so.



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You say, 'How do you account for it?' I account for it because we poor, wretched, tiny, helpless creatures, although we cannot get anything good in the creature, yet put some TRUST in it. But when God teaches us that we have nothing to trust in, when He makes us realize our own nothingness and utter helplessness, and gives us hold of Him with the grasp of despair, then we will begin to be of some use—and never till then. It is God worketh in us and by us. The Apostle labours all the way through to show and convince everybody that it was God in him and not of himself at all. Though he could have preached with enticing words of man's wisdom, and, no doubt, had many a temptation to do it, as everybody has who has dipped into the flowery paths of human rhetoric and learning, yet he eschewed this as he would the Devil. He said, no! "this one thing I do" putting aside absolutely all else, he went on straight to that work, till they cut his head off.

I believe you do perceive; but, if you do not, take the Book and examine it yourself. Be at the trouble. You will not get at the mind of the Lord without a great deal of trouble on these matters of power, spiritual union, and the like. Take the Bible with you on your knees before the Lord; show Him the words, and say, 'Now, Lord, show me the meaning of this.' Wait, and there will come a voice from the excellent glory. There will come light as from the Shekinah, which will reveal it in your spiritual consciousness, and you will thus know that thing for ever. You will be wiser than your teachers with respect to that particular point.

Further, you say, 'Can we have this power equally with the early disciples?' I say, reasoning by analogy, assuming that what God has done in the past He will continue to do in the future, is it not likely that He will give it to us, because we equally need it? We poor things, in our day, as they did in theirs, we equally need it: first, because the character of the agents is the same. We are very much like them, and they were very much like us. Thank God. It has often encouraged me. If they had been men of gigantic intellects and extraordinary education, training, and position; if they had possessed all human equipment and qualifications, we might have looked back through the ages in despair, and said, 'I can never be such as they were.' Look what they were, naturally, apart from this gift of power. The Holy Ghost has taken care to give us their true characters. They were men of like passions, weaknesses, tendencies, liability to fall, with ourselves—just such poor, frail, weak, easily-tripped-up creatures, and, in many instances, unbelieving and disobedient, before Pentecost. Now, I say this is encouraging for us all.

You remember what Jesus said to Mary, "Go and tell my disciples AND PETER." Mary, perhaps, would have left Peter out after his shameful denial of the Lord; for fear of this, Jesus said, "Go and



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tell my disciples AND PETER."

Ah! there are some here saying, 'But Peter was not so bad as I am.' Well, we don't know anything about that, but, whether you are worse or not, the Holy Ghost is equal to the emergency. He can cure you. He can baptize you with His power. You may have denied Him, if not as Peter did, yet practically as badly. It makes no difference to God whether you have been a little bad or very bad; whether you have denied Him once or thrice, or whether you have denied Him with oaths and curses. If you will only come and comply with the conditions, He will look on you, heal you, and baptize you with power. Did they not all forsake Him and flee, except a few poor faithful women? All the world forsook Him and fled in the hour of His extremity. 'Ah!' you say, 'well, I have done the same myself. I would not watch with Him one hour. I have betrayed Him before my friends and acquaintances in the world, where I have been brought into circumstances that have tested my fidelity. My courage has failed, and I have failed to witness for Him.' Yes, I know and agree with you that it was base ingratitude. You were a traitor, indeed, but still, if you will come back, 'Peter,' and repent, and do your first works, He will receive you—baptize you with power. Oh! what they were before Pentecost, and what they were after! Poor Peter, who could not stand the questionings of a servant maid, who could not dare to have it said that he was one of the despised Nazarenes, what a valiant soldier he afterwards became for the Lord Jesus Christ, and how tradition says he was crucified for his Master at the last. Anyway, we know he was a faithful and valiant soldier to the end of his journey.

Now, this baptism will transform you as it did them; it will make you all prophets and prophetesses, according to your measure.

Will you come and let Him baptize you? Will you learn, once and for ever, that it is not a question of human merit, strength or deserving at all, but simply a question of submission, obedience, faith.

Then we need it because not only are the agents the same, but our work is essentially the same.

It may differ in its outward manifestations because we live in an age of greater toleration, but it is just the same in essence, and I do not know, as to the manifestation, when you come to do it in Apostolic fashion, with the Apostolic spirit, whether you do not get very much the same Apostolic treatment. They gnash upon you with their teeth, and do as much as the law will let them, and sometimes a little more, in the way of stoning and persecuting you.



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The great thing to be done by this power of God is to subdue the naturally evil, wicked, and rebellious heart of man. Now God alone is able to do that. That is a superhuman work. You may enlighten a man's intellect, civilize his manners, reform his habits, make him a respectable, honest, industrious member of society, without the power of God, but you cannot transform HIS SOUL. That is too much for any human reformer. That is the prerogative of the Holy Ghost, and I have not a shadow of a doubt that the eternal day will reveal every other kind of work to be wood, hay, stubble. All the sham conversions, all the people whose lives and opinions have been changed by anything short of this power will be wood, hay, stubble. It is the prerogative of the Spirit of God. Therefore, God never pretends to do it by any other means; and all the way through the Bible this power is ascribed to the Spirit of God. Therefore, we want this Spirit to do this work. What! you set yourself to enlighten a darkened human soul, to convince a hardened, rebellious sinner, to convert a rebel in arms against God, with an inveterate hatred in the very core of his soul against God and all about God. You set yourself to bring down that—to transform that evil, wicked heart, to subdue that soul to submission and obedience! You try it, try it without the Spirit of God. Oh! no, you want that Spirit. You want the same measure of that Spirit, just the same, which Paul had.

And what is our work? To go and subjugate the world to Jesus; everybody we can reach, everybody we can influence, and bring them to the feet of Jesus, and make them realize that He is their lawful King and lawgiver; that the Devil is a usurper, and that they are to come and serve Christ all the days of their lives. Dare any of us think of it without this equipment of power? Talk about 'Can we have it?' we are of no use without it. What can we do without it? This is the reason of the effeteness of so much professed Christianity; there is no Holy Ghost in it. It is all rotten. It is like a very pretty corpse—you cannot say there is this wanting or the other wanting; it is a perfect form, but dead. It is like a good galvanic battery. It is all right—perfect in all its parts—but when you touch it there is no effect—there is no fire or shock. What is the matter? It only wants the fire—the power.

Oh! friends, we want the power that we may be able to go and stretch ourselves upon the dead in trespasses and sins, and breathe into him the breath of spiritual life. We want to be able to go and touch his eyes that he may see, and speak to the dead and deaf with the voice of God and make them hear. This is what we want—POWER.

If we equally need it, is it likely that God will withhold it? Why, the Book, rightly read and understood, is full of promise and exhortation to get it. Is it likely that if we are as frail as they were, if the work is the same, is it likely that the God of all grace, and our Father as much as theirs, and as much in



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sympathy with the souls of men, will withhold it from us No, No. But our Saviour distinctly told us that He bought it for us—that it was more expedient that His people should have it than that He should remain with them. It is promised to all believers to the end of time. The conditions you know—simply putting away everything that hinders, casting aside every doubtful thing, trampling it in the dust; then a full, whole-hearted surrender to Him, embracing the Cross, embracing His will at all costs and sacrifices, and then a determined march to the upper room at Jerusalem and a determined abiding there until you get it—these are the conditions. Anybody can have it on these terms.

Then, in conclusion, let me remind you—and it makes my own soul almost reel when I think of it that God holds us responsible. He holds you responsible for all the good you might do if you had it. Do not deceive yourself. He will have the five talents with their increase. He will not have an excuse for one, and you will not dare to go up to the throne, and say, 'Thou wast a hard Master, reaping where Thou hast not sown, and gathering where Thou hadst not strewn. Thou badest me to save souls when Thou knewest I had not the power.' What will He say to you? 'Wicked and slothful servant, out of thine own mouth will I judge thee. You knew where you could have got the power. You knew the conditions. You might have had it. Where are the souls you might have saved? Where are the children that I would have given you? Where is the fruit?'

Oh! friends, these are solemn and awful realities. If I did not believe them I should not stand here. Oh, what you might do! Who can tell? Who would ever have thought, twenty years ago, when I first raised my voice, a feeble, trembling woman, one of the most timid and bashful the Lord ever saved, the hundreds of precious souls that would be given me? I only refer to myself because I know my own case better than that of another; but, let me ask you—supposing I had held back and been disobedient to the Heavenly vision, what would God have said to me for the loss of all this fruit? Thank God, much of it is already gathered into heaven, people who have sent me word from their dying beds, that they blessed God they had ever heard my voice, saying that they should wait for me on the other side, prepared to lead me to the throne. What would have become of the fruit? I should not have had it, anyway. They would never have become my crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord. Oh, who can tell what God can do by any man or woman, however timid, however faint, if only fully given up to Him. My brother, He holds you responsible. He holds you responsible, my sister—you, who wrote me about your difficulties and temptations in testifying of Jesus—He holds you responsible. What are you going to do? Ask yourself. It is coming. You believe it. You say you do. Unless you are a confirmed hypocrite, you do believe that you are going to stand before the throne of His glory. You believe you are going to stand before Him by and bye, when you shall receive



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according to the things you have done in your body. What shall you say? The world is dying—souls are being damned at an awful rate every day. Men are running to destruction. Torrents of iniquity are rolling down our streets and through our world. God is almost tired of the cry of our sins and iniquities going up into His ears. What are you going to do, brother? What are you going to do? Will you set to work? Will you get this power? Will you put away everything that hinders? Will you have it at all costs?

We had a letter only on Friday, about a gentleman who had been reconverted in the services of The Salvation Army, telling us that he has relinquished an income of £800 a year, in order to keep a conscience void of offence—this is the result of the power of the Holy Ghost. I heard of another gentleman who was invited to a party. After dinner, the card-table was got out, as usual, and when the cards were all spread and everybody was ready to begin, this gentleman jumped up, and pushed it away, and said, 'I have done with this for ever.' The lady who told me said, 'He was down on his knees before we had time to turn round, and was praying for us and for all the house. 'Oh!' she added, 'you should have seen them.' Yes, of course, every man felt like the people round the Saviour. Every man's own conscience condemned him. 'They went off home, without any more cardplaying, or dancing, or wine-drinking that night.' Come out from amongst the ungodly. Testify against them. Reprove them. Entreat them with tears. But be determined to deliver your soul of their blood. God will give you the power, and He holds you responsible for doing this—you people who have been coming here, who have received the light. WILL YOU DO IT? If you will, we shall meet again, and rejoice with joy unspeakable. If you do, we shall praise God for ever that He brought us inside the walls of this building, long after it has mouldered into dust. There shall be children and grandchildren, and great grandchildren from you spiritually, if you will only be faithful.

From a series of lectures given by Catherine Booth in 1880.