

The Holy Spirit of Promise

by Charles Finney

Charles Finney's sermon emphasizes that the blessing of Abraham, which is the Holy Spirit, is available to all through faith in Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Genesis 12:3, Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 36:27, John 7:38-39, Acts 1:4-5, Romans 4:13-16, Galatians 3:14, Galatians 3:29, Ephesians 1:13, Ephesians 2:12-22

Topics: "The Holy Spirit", "Faith and Promise"

Description

Charles Finney emphasizes that the blessing of Abraham has been extended to the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, highlighting that this blessing is the Holy Spirit, which is to be received by faith. He explains that the New Covenant fulfills the promises made to Abraham, allowing all nations to partake in the spiritual blessings originally intended for Abraham's descendants. Finney stresses that this promise is not only for the Jews but for all who believe, and it is essential to understand that the Holy Spirit is a gift to be received through faith, not works. He encourages believers to claim this promise actively and to recognize the urgency of receiving the Holy Spirit in their lives. The sermon concludes with a call to action for Christians to embrace their inheritance as children of promise and to seek the Holy Spirit earnestly.

Transcript

Text. Gal. 3:14.--That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

This text teaches us:

- I. THAT THE BLESSING OF ABRAHAM HAS COME ON THE GENTILES THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.
- II. IT TEACHES WHAT THIS BLESSING IS.
- III. THAT IT IS TO BE RECEIVED BY FAITH.

Before I conclude what I wish to say upon the promises, I will notice the relation which the New Covenant sustains to the Covenant made with Abraham. And I am to show,

- I. That the blessing of Abraham has come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.

In the 12th chapter of Genesis, we have the first mention of the covenant which God made with Abraham. In the last clause of the third verse it is said, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." In Gen. 17:4, it is written, "As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations." Verse 7, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee;" and 18:18, the same promise is noticed again; and 22:18, "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," and 26:4, the same words are repeated.

Now it should be remembered in regard to the covenant made with Abraham, that there were two things promised. Temporal Canaan or Palestine was promised to the Jews or natural descendants of Abraham. There was also a blessing promised through Abraham to all the nations of the earth.--This covenant was not only made with Abraham, but, through his seed, as we shall see, with all the nations of the earth. This was a spiritual blessing, and that which the text says has come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.

I will quote several other passages to show that this spiritual blessing was intended for, and has come on the Gentiles. In Rom. 4:13, it is said, "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith."--and verse 16, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed: not to that only which is of the law, but to that which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all." This epistle to the Romans was written to the Gentiles. And the Apostle here expressly affirms that the Gentiles who had faith are of the seed of Abraham, and that he is the father of us all.

Gal. 3:7, 9, 14, 29. "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Here again it is manifest that the Apostle in writing to the Gentiles, expressly includes them in the covenant made with Abraham, and affirms that if they are Christians, then they are "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." And 4:28, he says "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise."--Here then he affirms that the Gentiles are as absolutely within the promise made to Abraham as Isaac was. In Eph. 2:12-22, we have it declared in full that the Gentiles inherit all the promises of spiritual blessings made to Abraham and the fathers--that there is no distinction in this respect between Jews and Gentiles, that all who have faith are entitled to the promises of spiritual blessings. "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us: Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God, And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; In whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." I might quote many more passages to the same import, but these must suffice.

II. I am to show what this blessing is.

1. It is not merely a promise that Christ should be of his seed, for the Apostle affirms in Gal. 3:16, 19 that the promise was made to Christ through Abraham. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds as of many, but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgression, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator." And in the text it is said "that the blessing might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." This blessing then promised was not Christ himself, but some promise to Christ, and through Christ to all the nations of the earth.

2. The text informs us that this blessing promised to Abraham, and to his seed, and through Christ his seed, to all the nations of the earth, is the Holy Spirit. This is the grand thing upon which the prophets and the inspired writers seem to have had their eye all along under the old dispensation. And by a careful examination of the scriptures, it will be found that the promises are one unbroken chain from Abraham to Christ, and even to the time when the canon of the scripture was complete, everywhere pointing out this particular blessing.

It was promised sometimes in figurative language, where the Spirit of God is represented as water. But in most instances the prophets have spoken without a figure and promised the Spirit by name. Isa. 32:15, "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest."--and 44:3, "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring;" and 59:21, "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever."

Jer. 31:33, "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." and 32:40, "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Ezek. 11:19, "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh;" and 36:27, "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them;" and the text; "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

Acts 1:4, 5, "And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptised with water; but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." John 7:38, 39, "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.)" and 16:7, 13: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." and

14:16, 17: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

A careful examination of these passages will show what the great blessing under the eye of inspiration was. The great thing promised to Abraham as affirmed in the text, and in these passages which I have now quoted, with numerous other passages that might be quoted, demonstrate that the great thing promised was the Holy Spirit. This was the spiritual blessing that belonged to all nations, while temporal Canaan belonged only to the Jews. In Eph. 1:13, the Holy Spirit is expressly called the "Holy Spirit of promise."

III. This blessing is to be received by faith.

1. This is expressly asserted in the text. "That we might receive the promise of the Spirit THROUGH FAITH." In the second verse of this same chapter the Apostle inquires, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of FAITH?" John 7:28-29 [38-39] Christ says, "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." Other passages might be quoted to the same effect.

2. It is a natural impossibility that it should be received but by faith. This will be manifest if we inquire.

(1) into the nature of faith.

(2) what it is to receive the Holy Ghost.

The three elements of faith are,

(a) An intellectual perception of the truth.

(b) A realization of the truth.

(c) That trust or confidence of the heart that yields all our voluntary powers up to the control of truth. These are the essential elements of faith.

(2) To receive the Holy Spirit is to take him for our Parakletos, our Comforter, Guide, Instructor. Now it is manifest on the very face of it, that the Holy Spirit can only be received by the mind, by that act which constitutes faith. Perception of the truth, is not itself faith. A realization of the truth is not itself faith. Though both these are indispensable to its existence, yet faith itself is an act of the will--a trust--a confiding in--a yielding up of the whole being to the influence of truth.--Faith then is the yielding up of our voluntary powers to the guidance, instruction, influences and government of the Holy Spirit. This is receiving him, and this is the only possible way in which he can be received. The mere perception of truth respecting him is not faith, nor is it a receiving of him. For the truth respecting him may be perceived, and often has been perceived and yet rejected. Nor is a realization of the truth respecting him, however deep and intense either faith, or a receiving of him. But when his offers of guidance are perceived and realized, faith is that act of the mind that lays hold upon these offers--that yields up the whole being to his influences and control.

REMARKS.

1. The Abrahamic covenant is not abolished. Nor is it yet fulfilled to all the world. It has been supposed by some that the Abrahamic covenant was fulfilled at the coming of Christ, and was then abolished. This notion arises out of the mistaken opinion that Christ was the particular blessing promised. But it has been shown that Christ was not the thing promised, but that the promise was made to him, and through him to all the nations of the earth. This covenant then is not abrogated nor set aside, nor can it be till all the nations of the earth are blessed by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. And it is manifest that this covenant not only concerns all the nations of some one generation, but extends its provisions to the end of time.

2. This promise made to Abraham, and all those others founded upon it and promising the same things, are now due, i.e. the time has come when they are to be considered as promises in the present tense. They may now be claimed by the Church for themselves and for all the nations of the earth. These promises were not due in Abraham's day. They were promises to him and to all the Old Testament saints of future good. And it is expressly said of Abraham and of the Old Testament saints that they "all died in faith not having received the promises but having seen them afar off." And again in Heb. 11:39.[,] 40.[:] "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Here it is plainly declared that these promises are due to us and available to us in a higher sense than they were to Abraham and the Old Testament saints.

3. The New Covenant so often quoted, and so largely dwelt upon, is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant to those who receive it. It consists in the Holy Spirit taking up his abode in the heart and writing his law there. Let it be understood then that the New Covenant sustains the same relation to the Abrahamic Covenant that the fulfillment of a promise does to the promise itself. The Abrahamic Covenant and the New Covenant are not identical, but the one is the fulfillment of the other.

4. This blessing of the Holy Spirit is to be received at once, by faith, irrespective of all works. No work whatever, performed without his influences prepares us, in the least degree, to receive him, or at all puts us in more favorable circumstances in respect to our salvation or sanctification.

5. All preparation on our part to receive him and all delay, however earnest we may suppose ourselves to be in seeking and preparing to receive his influences, are only self-righteousness and rebellion--a vain and God provoking attempt to get grace by works and to purchase by our Pharisaical efforts the gift of the Holy Ghost. It does seem to be one of the most difficult things in the world, for the self-righteous spirit of man to understand the simplicity of Gospel faith. He is continually seeking salvation and sanctification by works of law without being aware of it.

6. I have already said that since the seed has come, to whom the promise was made, i.e. Christ, that we are to regard the promise of the universal effusion of the Holy Spirit, as a promise in the present tense, to be so understood, and plead, and its present fulfillment urged by the Church. Until the Church come to understand this as a promise actually made to all nations and as having actually become due, and now to be received and treated by them as a promise in the present tense, the Millennium will never come.

When God had promised the restoration of Israel, after seventy years' captivity in Babylon, it is said that Daniel learned by books, i.e. by the prophets, that the captivity should continue but seventy years. At the end of the seventy years therefore he set his face, by prayer and supplication with sackcloth and ashes, to the Lord for the fulfillment of his promise. And he wrestled with God until he prevailed.

When God had expressly promised to Elijah that if he would go and show himself to Ahab he would send rain upon the earth, he regarded the promise, after he had shown himself to Ahab, as in the present tense, as he had a right to do. But he did not expect the fulfillment without prayer. But on the contrary he gave himself to mighty wrestlings with God, and did not leave his knees until the cloud was seen to arise that watered all the land.

So God in the promise of the outpouring of his [S]pirit in Ezek. 36:25, 27 has added in the 37th verse, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." Now the Church are praying, and have been for a long time, for the Millennium to come, and for the fulfillment of this promise. But let me inquire. Do they understand these as promises now due, which they have a right to plead in faith for all the nations of the earth. It would seem as if they supposed the promise still future, and do not understand that a promise which is due at some specified future time, is ever after that time, to all intents and purposes, a promise in the present tense. And until it is so regarded, and treated, and pleaded, and the requisite means used for its accomplishment, it can never be fulfilled. Christians seem to pray as if they supposed it questionable whether God's time had come to convert the world. They ask him to do it in his own time and way, &c. Now it should be understood that he has bound himself by a promise to give his Spirit to all the nations of the earth, when the seed to whom the promise was made had come, and prepared the way for the bestowment of the blessing. Now God says, he "will be inquired of by the house of Israel." It is not enough that some one, or some few should understand these promises aright, and plead them. A few can never use a sufficient amount of means to bring about their fulfillment. They must be understood by Christians generally, in their proper import and as being now due, and they must resolve not to hold their peace, nor give God rest until he makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth. They must insist upon their fulfillment now, and not consent that it should be put off any longer. Hundreds of millions have gone to hell since these promises have become due, and should have been so regarded and pleaded and means used for their fulfillment. How long shall the Church make it an act of piety and think themselves submitting to the will of God, in letting these promises rot in their Bible while God is waiting to fulfill them, and commanding them not to give him rest until he does fulfill them?

7. The Old Testament saints were saved not by works of law, but by faith in the covenant made with Abraham. In other words Abraham himself together with all that were saved before and after him, under the Old Testament dispensation, were saved by faith in Christ. The ceremonial law was a shadow of the Gospel, and it is expressly said in Gal. 3:8 that, "the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying in thee shall all nations be blessed." Here then this covenant with Abraham is called the Gospel, a preaching before or foretelling the Gospel to Abraham. The difference then between the old dispensation and the new, does not lie in the fact that under the old dispensation the saints were saved by works, while under the new they are saved by grace. All that ever were saved were saved by grace through faith in Christ. But under the old dispensation the Holy Ghost was neither promised nor enjoyed to such an extent as he is promised and enjoyed under the new dispensation. The thing that Abraham and the Old Testament saints did not receive was that measure of the Holy Spirit which constitutes the New Covenant, and produces the entire sanctification of the soul.

8. Finally. Every individual Christian may receive and is bound to receive this gift of the Holy Ghost through faith at the present moment. It must not be supposed that every Christian has of course received the Holy Ghost in such a sense as it is promised in these passages of Scripture or in any higher sense than he was received by the Old Testament saints who had actually been regenerated and were real

saints, of whom it is said, that "they all died in faith not having received the promises." Now it would seem as if there were thousands of Christians who have not received the promises on account of their ignorance and unbelief. It is said that "after we believe we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." Now beloved the thing that we need is to understand and get hold of this promise to Abraham, and through Abraham to Christ, and through Christ and by Christ to the whole Church of God. Now remember it is to be received by simple faith in these promises. "Be it unto thee according to thy faith." "For it is written the just shall live by faith."

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