

The Spirit and Power of Elijah

by F.B. Meyer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit, which is the source of Elijah's power and ministry, and provides conditions for receiving the Holy Spirit: being emptied of self, being obedient to God's commands, and living on the Word of God.

Scripture: Acts 2:17

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Empowerment for Service"

Description

F.B. Meyer emphasizes the transformative power of the Holy Spirit as exemplified in the life of Elijah, contrasting the limited experience of the Spirit in the Old Testament with the abundant outpouring available to all believers since Pentecost. He illustrates that while Elijah was filled with the Spirit, every believer today can also receive this divine empowerment for service, provided they meet the conditions of being emptied, obedient, and living on the Word of God. Meyer encourages Christians to seek a deeper relationship with the Holy Spirit, which can lead to extraordinary acts of faith and service, just as Elijah did. He stresses that the fullness of the Spirit is not reserved for a select few but is a promise for all who believe. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a commitment to spiritual emptiness and obedience to experience the fullness of God's power in their lives.

Transcript

How can those who have traveled in Switzerland forget the early mornings when they have been summoned from sleep to await the dawn? A weird and mysterious hush possesses nature as a crowd is hushed in expectancy of a king's approach. Then a strange light spreads outward from the eastern sky. At last one of the loftiest Alps is smitten with the roseate flush of dawn; then another, and another, and yet another, until all the peaks, mantled with untrodden snow, are lit up and transfigured with burning splendor. But during all this time the valleys below are swathed in mist and veiled in darkness. It is only after hours have passed away and the monarch of the day has climbed slowly toward his throne that the blessed sunlight penetrates to the tiny hamlets and scattered chalets, or sparkles in the brooks, or casts shadows from the stones and flowers.

This illustration will show the difference between the dispensation which closed with the first advent of our Lord and that in which it is our happiness to live, and which is to close with His glorious Epiphany. Each has been blessed with the ministry of the Holy Ghost; but it is in this age alone, dating from the day of Pentecost, that He has been poured forth on sons and daughters, and on {35} servants and handmaidens

(Acts 2:17-18). Now every believer, even the humblest and the weakest, may be bathed in His divine and sacred influence; but in Elijah's time, only the elite of the household of faith knew what His eternal fullness meant. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). "The prophets... searched... what the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify" (1 Peter 1:11). The Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39).

Elijah was one of these men who were filled with the Holy Ghost. This was the Universal testimony of those who knew him best. Elisha's one desire was that he should be heir to the Spirit which was so manifestly upon his master (2 Kings 2:9). "The spirit of Elijah" was a familiar phrase on the lips of the sons of the prophets (2 Kings 2:15). And years after, when the angel of God spake to Zacharias in the Temple, he could find no better illustration of the presence of the Holy Ghost in his promised child, than by saying, "He shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias" (Luke 1:15-17).

The glorious ministry of Elijah was due not to any inherent qualities in himself but to the extraordinary indwelling of the Holy Ghost who was given to him as to other holy men of God in the old time -- through faith. If, then, we could but have that same Spirit in an equal measure, we should be able to repeat his marvelous deeds. It is said that it would be possible to gather up the mighty force of Niagara and, transforming it into electricity, carry it along a wire to drive machinery one hundred miles away. If this should ever be done, it would be a matter of almost perfect indifference whether the wire were slender or thick. The mighty force could as well travel along the slender thread, and as well perform {36} its marvels, as through an electric cable. So the question for us all is whether the Holy Ghost is working with and through us in power. If He is, then, though our nature be paltry and weak, He shall effect through us the same mighty deeds as through men vastly our superiors in mental and moral force. Nay, we may even glory in our infirmities, that this divine power may rest upon us more conspicuously, and that the glory may be more evidently God's.

Now the question arises. May we, ordinary Christian people living in our modern society, hope to receive the Holy Spirit in that extraordinary and special measure in which He rested upon Elijah? Of course we have all received the Holy Spirit to a certain extent, or we could never have come to Jesus. All the graces of the Christian character, all our comfort, all our overcomings, are due to His presence.

Every virtue we possess,

And every victory won,

And every thought of holiness,

Are His alone.

Author Unknown

And yet it is clear that over and beyond this ordinary grace, which all believers must have, there is a blessed anointing of the Holy Ghost which gives special equipment and fitness for service. Elijah had it. Our blessed Lord, as the perfect servant, had it. Being full of the Holy Ghost, He returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and traced His marvelous power to the fact that the Holy Spirit was upon Him (Luke 4:1, 14, 18). The apostles had it from the day of Pentecost when they received the fullness of the Spirit for witness-bearing, although they must have possessed Him before for personal {37} character (compare Acts 1:8 and 2:4 with John 20:22). The Samaritan believers had it, but only after Peter and John had

prayed for them "that they might receive the Holy Ghost" -- although it is evident that their previous conversion and joy had been due to His blessed work (Acts 8:15-16). The disciples at Ephesus had it, but only after Paul had laid his hands upon them.

This is surely what we want. And this is what we may have. This special anointing for service is not only for men like Elijah or Paul or Peter who soar far beyond us into the azure skies, but for us all as long as there stands upon the page of revelation these priceless words, "The promise [referring obviously to Acts 1:4] is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39). We are among the far-off ones, and therefore we may claim the promise for ourselves and receive the fullness of the Holy Ghost to equip us for our life and ministry.

But there are three conditions with which we must comply if we would receive and keep this blessed gift.

WE MUST BE EMPTIED

God cannot fill us if we are already filled. It took ten days to drain the apostles, even though they had spent three years under the immediate tuition of Christ. But the emptying process was an indispensable preliminary to the day of Pentecost. For Elijah, this process went on beside the drying brook and during the long and dreary march to Zarephath and throughout his sojourn there. It apparently took three years and six months. It was a long and weary waiting time, but it was well spent. As he became emptied of self, self-sufficiency, and self-dependence he became more and more filled with the {38} Spirit of power so that Carmel itself, with all its heroic deeds, was gloriously possible to him.

Are we willing to pay this price? Are we prepared for God to empty us of all that is in the anywise contrary to his will? Are we content to be empty and broken vessels, that the river, in whose bed we lie, may easily flow through us? If not, let us ask Him to work in us to will His own good pleasure -- plunging the cold, stubborn iron into the glowing furnace of His grace until it can be bent into perfect conformity to His own glorious will. But if we are willing, let us present our emptied nature to the Son of God, that He may fill us with the fullness of the Spirit. Let us also believe that He does fill us, as soon as we yield ourselves to Him. You do not want more of Him more urgently than He wants more of you, and the one is the condition of the other (James 4:5 RV). Grace, like nature, abhors a vacuum. Just as the cold, fresh air will rush in to fill an exhausted receiver as soon as it has a chance to enter, so does the grace of the Holy Spirit enter the heart that can boast of nothing but an aching void. There may be no ecstasy, no rushing wind, no fiery baptism; but nevertheless, "the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his Temple" (Malachi 3:1) in floods of silent and golden light. "Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches. For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water" (2 Kings 3:16-17).

Many Christians, seeking this blessed fullness, make the same mistake as is constantly made by those who seek after forgiveness and acceptance with God. They look within for evidences of the indwelling of the Spirit and refuse to believe in His presence unless they detect certain signs which they consider befitting. This is entirely wrong. The reckoning is not of feeling but of faith. {39}

If we have complied with God's directions we must believe, whether we feel any difference or not, that God has done His part and has kept His promise, given to us through Jesus Christ our Lord; and that He has not been slower to give us the Holy Spirit than earthly fathers are to give bread to their hungry children (Luke 11:13). When we leave the chamber where we have solemnly dedicated ourselves to God and sought to be filled with the Spirit, we must not examine our feelings to discover whether there is such a difference in us as we might expect; but we must cry in the assurance of faith, "I praise Thee, Blessed

One, that Thou hast not failed to perform Thy chosen work. Thou hast entered my longing heart, and hast taken up Thine abode in me. Henceforth Thou shalt have Thy way with me, to will and do Thine own good pleasure."

We should not seek to know the presence of the Holy Ghost by any signs pointing to Himself. He reveals not Himself, but Christ. The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ (John 16:14). And the surest symptoms that He is within are sensitivity to sin, tenderness of conscience, and the growing love for Jesus, the fragrance of His name, sympathy with His purposes. Have you these in growing measure? Then you know somewhat of His gracious filling.

A little child was once asked her age; and she replied, "I don't feel like seven. I feel like six; but Mother says I'm seven." Here was the reckoning of faith, putting her mother's word before her own feeling. And thus we must refuse to consider ourselves, to diagnose our symptoms, or feel our pulse; but must launch out upon the deep of God's truthfulness and let down our nets for a draught of power and blessing. {40}

WE MUST BE OBEDIENT

We have already insisted on this, but it is so indispensable that repeated emphasis must be laid upon it. Christ reiterated His appeals for the keeping of His commands in almost every sentence of His closing discourses with His disciples (John 14:15,21,23-24). He gives the secret of His own abiding in His Father's love in these striking words: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10). Instant and implicit obedience to the teaching of the Word and the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit is an absolute condition of keeping, or increasing, the store of sacred influence. On the contrary, one little item of disobedience persisted in is quite sufficient to check all further bestowments, and even to deprive us of what we have. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword" (Isaiah 1:19-20). Nor is such obedience hard, for all God's commands are enablings, and His grace is sufficient. Look out for it. If only every believer who reads these lines would resolve from this hour to imitate Elijah, who went and did according to the word of the Lord (1 Kings 17:5,8-10) -- not with the thought of merit, but beneath the inspiration of love; not in the weightier matters only, but in the crossings of the T's and in the dottings of the I's -- they would find at once that there would open before them a life of almost inconceivable glory. It is from the heights of unwavering obedience that we catch sight of the wide and open sea of blessedness. The exact obedience of Elias is the inviolable condition of receiving and keeping the spirit and power of Elijah. {41}

WE MUST LIVE ON THE WORD OF GOD

Elijah, the widow, and her son lived on their daily replenished stores; but the prophet had other meat to eat which they knew not of: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). It was on that word that Elijah fed during those long and slow-moving days. Sometimes he would climb up the heights behind the little town, in deep meditation upon that Word which is like the great mountains. Sometimes he would pace the seashore, musing on those judgments which are a great deep. He could say, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart! (Jeremiah 15:16). And sitting with the widow and her son, he would make that Word the topic of his constant talk; so that she was compelled to refer to it in these significant terms: "I know... that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth" (1 Kings 17:24).

This is the further absolute condition of becoming and remaining filled with the Holy Ghost. The Spirit works with and through the Word. What the metal is to the locomotive, what the wire is to the electric spark, what the grammar is to the teacher -- the Word of God is to the Spirit of God. If we neglect the reverent study of Scripture we cut ourselves off from the very vehicle through which God's Spirit teaches human spirits. And this is the great fault of our times. Christian people will {42} attend conventions, plunge into all kinds of Christian work, read many good books about the Bible and Christian living; but they give the Bible itself the most cursory and superficial heed. And it is for this reason that the Bible does not speak to them.

If you would know all the wondrous beauty of a forest glade, you must not be satisfied with passing through it with hasty foot and in company with a troop of merry children whose ringing laughter carries panic into the hearts of thousands of shy living things that, with trembling hearts, keep still in hole and brake and nest. No, you must go alone and sit quietly down on the log of some felled tree and wait. Then the mystery of beauty will begin to unfold itself: the fairy bowers, the mossy glens, the interlacing boughs. Presently a note will sound from yonder bough, as the signal for the outburst of many sweet-voiced choristers, and the woodland will ring with the music of the birds while the squirrel runs up some neighboring tree, and the rabbits come out to feed, and the young foxes play about their holes. All this is hidden from those who cannot wait. So there are mysteries of glory and beauty in Scripture hidden from the wise and prudent but revealed to babes. There is no book that will so repay time spent over its pages as the Word of God.

A neglected Bible means a starved and strengthless spirit, a comfortless heart, a barren life, and a grieved Holy Ghost. If the people who are now perpetually running about to meetings for crumbs of help and comfort, would only stay at home and search their Bibles, there would be more happiness in the Church and more blessing on the world. It is very prosaic counsel, but it is true.

We reserve our next chapter for an account of the {43} life of this Spirit-filled man and the household in which he dwelt. Suffice it now to say that the Holy Ghost, which dwelt in so largely, revealed Himself in those very traits which must always be His fruits: gentleness under provocation, steadfastness in trial, power in prayer, life victorious over death. But we may note, in closing, the remarkable admission of the widow: "I know that thou art a man of God" (1 Kings 17:24).

We talk of the man of letters, the man of honor, the man of mark; but how infinitely better to be known as a man of God -- one of God's men, a man after God's own heart! And how splendid the tribute when we are so addressed by those with whom we live! "Familiarity breeds contempt" is a cliché, but when a man is filled with the Holy Ghost; the more he is known, the more clearly he is proved to be a man of God.

And in Elijah's case, the power of the indwelling Spirit evinced itself in the marvelous effect produced on that widow and her child. The widow was convinced of sin and led to the truth of God. The son was brought back from death into life. And such result shall accrue in our experiences, if we will only seek to be filled with the fullness of God. "He that believeth in me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12). "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts 1:8).

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