

The Gospel of the Holy Spirit's Love

by Horatius Bonar

The Holy Spirit loves us as truly as the Father and the Son, and recognizing His love is essential for peace and faith.

Scripture: Psalm 139:17, Isaiah 40:1, Jeremiah 29:11, Matthew 28:19, Luke 11:13, John 4:24, Romans 8:26, Ephesians 1:13, 1 John 4:8, Revelation 22:17

Topics: "The Love of the Holy Spirit", "The Trinity"

Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes the profound love of the Holy Spirit, asserting that His love is equal to that of the Father and the Son, and is essential for understanding the fullness of God's grace. He argues that the Holy Spirit's love is not only personal but also active in the lives of believers, guiding, comforting, and empowering them in their spiritual journey. Bonar warns against misconceptions that portray the Spirit as distant or austere, urging believers to trust in His loving nature for growth in faith and joy. He highlights the Spirit's role in the Church and the necessity of recognizing His love to experience true peace and spiritual vitality. Ultimately, Bonar calls for a deeper relationship with the Holy Spirit, who is a living personality, not just an influence, and whose love is foundational to the Christian faith.

Transcript

Does the Holy Spirit love us?

There can be but one answer to this question. Yes! He does.

As truly as the Father loveth us, as truly as the Son loveth us, so truly does the Spirit love us. The grace or free love which a sinner needs, and which has been revealed and sealed to us through the Seed of the woman, the "Word made flesh," belongs equally to Father, Son, and Spirit. That love which we believe to be in God must be the same in each Person of the Godhead, else the Godhead would be divided; one Person at variance with the others, or, at least, less loving than the others: which is impossible.

Twice over it is written, God is love (1 John 4:8,16); and this applies to each Person of the Godhead. The Father is love; the Son is love; the Spirit is love. The Trinity is a Trinity of Love.

When it is said, "God is a Spirit" (John 4:24), the words refer to each Person. If we lose sight of the love of one, we shall lose sight of the love of all. That which is the glory of Jehovah, is the glory of each of the three Persons. Let us beware of misrepresenting the Trinity by believing in unequal love, a love that is not

equally large and free in each.

When it is said, "God is light" (1 John 1:5), we know that these words are true of the whole three Persons; not merely of the Father or of the Son. The Father is light; the Son is light; the Spirit is light. As of light, so of love; and he who would doubt that the Spirit is love, must needs also doubt that the Spirit is light. That which is written of God, is written of the Spirit of God. That "name" which God has proclaimed as His, belongs to the Spirit as certainly as to the Father and the Son,- "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands" (Exo 34:6). Shall we rob the Holy Spirit of that blessed name? His personality claims it; and the gracious characteristics which go to make up the name, are as much those of the Spirit as those of the Father and the Son. The personality of the Spirit requires that what is thus written of one should be applicable to all. We are wont to say of the three Persons, "They are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory." If so, then the love which we affirm of the whole we must affirm of each. They must be equal in love, as well as in "power and glory."

Let not the old question of unbelief come in "How can these things be?" We cannot "find out the Almighty unto perfection" (Job 11:7); but shall this inability of ours lead to doubt? Shall it not rather lead to faith? Shall we rob the Spirit of His love, because we cannot understand the deep wonders of Godhead? Shall we not rather say, If there be love in God at all, there must be love in the Spirit? For to Him it is given to carry out in human hearts the purposes of redeeming love, in striving, awakening, drawing, convincing, quickening, comforting; so that it is impossible to suppose that His love can be less warm, less tender, less large, less personal than the love of the Father and the Son.

Laying aside the disputes of intellectual pride, the questionings of vain human reason, the puzzling suggestions of unhumiliated self-righteousness, the fond endeavours to comprehend the hidden things of God, the stubborn determination not to believe unless we see "signs and wonders" (John 4:48), let us recognize in that simple formula, God is love the foundation of our faith as to the Spirit's gracious character, and the solution of all our perplexities as to His personal and ineffable love. True, He did not take flesh for us; He did not become poor for us; He did not die for us; He did not weep for us the human tears which the Son of God wept over Jerusalem; but none the less does He love us; and none the less is His work for us and in us the work of love,-love without bounds, or change, or end.

We are baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt 28:19). That threefold name is love; or rather, that one name in its threefold connection with the three Persons, unfolds itself as the expression of the threefold love of Father, Son, and Spirit. The name thus named upon us is the divine declaration and pledge to us of "the love of the Spirit." Our baptism says, not only, "God the Father loveth us," not only, "God the Son loveth us"; but also, "God the Spirit loveth us." We are baptized into the love of the Spirit.

Perhaps much of our slow progress in the walk of faith is to be traced to our overlooking the love of the Spirit. We do not deal with Him, for strength and advancement, as one who really loveth us, and longs to bless us, and delights to help our infirmities (Rom 8:26). We regard Him as cold, or distant, or austere; we do not trust Him for His grace, nor realize how much He is in earnest in His dealings with us. More childlike confidence in Him and in His love would help us on mightily. Let us not grieve Him, nor vex Him, nor quench Him by our untrustfulness, by disbelieving or doubting the riches of His grace, the abundance of His loving-kindness.

He is no mere "influence," but a living "Personality"; and there is a vast difference between these two things. An "influence" cannot love us, and we cannot love an "influence." If there is to be love, there must be personality; and, in this case, it must be the personality of love. The fresh breath of spring is an influence, but not a personality. It cannot love us nor call on us to love it. The voice of that which we call "nature" is an influence, but not a personality. There can be no mutual love between it and us. But a being with a soul is a personality, not an influence; and the love of man or woman is a personal thing, a true and real affection-one eye looking into another, and one heart touching its fellow. So is it with the love of the Spirit. There is a personality about Him passing all the personalities of earth,-passing all the personalities of men or angels; and it is this divine personality that makes His love so precious and so suitable, as well as so true and real. There is no reality of love like that of the Spirit. It has nothing in common with the coldness or distance of a mere "influence." It comes closely home to a human heart, because it is the love of Him who formed the heart, and who is seeking to make it His abode for ever.

The proofs of His love are abundant. They are divine proofs; and, therefore, assuredly true. It is God who has given them to us, that no doubt of the Spirit's love may ever enter our minds. They are spread over all Scripture, in different forms and aspects. While the Bible was meant to be specially the revelation of the Son of God, it is also the revelation of the Holy Spirit. He reveals Himself while revealing Christ. He utters His own love while showing us the love of the Father and the Son.

The thoughts of the Spirit are thoughts of love. The apostle uses the words, "the mind of the Spirit," in connection with His gracious intercession (Rom 8:26,27); and we know that intercession implies love. The "groanings that cannot be uttered" are awakened in us by the Spirit in His love. He thinks of us; and His thoughts are "precious" (Psa 139:17). Yes; He thinks of us; and His thoughts are thoughts of peace (Jer 29:11). The Bible is filled with the thoughts of the Spirit; and they are love. They breathe in every page of Scripture; for holy men of God "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

The ways of the Spirit are the ways of love. His manifold dealings with the sons of men, in "opening hearts" (Acts 16:14), teaching, sanctifying, chastening, are the dealings of love,-love which many waters cannot quench, and which the floods cannot drown. The faintest touch of His hand is the touch of love. The gentlest whisper of His voice is the whisper of love. All His dealings from day to day, whether of cheer or of chastisement, whether of warning or of welcome, are those of love. In a thousand ways He beckons us to come to the Cross; He draws us, unconsciously and imperceptibly, but irresistibly, away from sin and self to God and heaven. He has not, indeed, human tears to shed, like the son of God when he wept over Jerusalem; but not the less are His yearnings true and tender, and all His ways toward us are ways of unutterable compassion (see Gen 6:3; Psa 51:11,12; Isa 55:8). He is "very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

The works of the Spirit are the works of love. When He "garnished the heavens" (Job 26:13), it was the work of love. When he moved upon the face of the deep (Gen 1:2), it was in love. When He came upon holy men of old, it was in love. When He wrote the Scriptures, it was in love,-love to us. When He anointed Jesus of Nazareth to preach the gospel to the poor, it was in love to us. When He fulfills His office of "guiding into all truth," it is in love. When He opens eyes and hearts, it is in love. When He chastens, it is in love. When He comforts, it is in love. When He sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, it is in love. When He, as one with the Father and the Son, wrote the seven epistles of the Revelation, it was in love,-as the close of each of them shows: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Rev 2:7). His works in the soul of man, in regenerating, upholding, and perfecting, are the works of love,-love like that of Christ, "that passeth knowledge": love to the chief of sinners; love to those who have vexed and resisted and quenched Him; love which says, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?

how shall I deliver thee, Israel?" (Hosea 11:8).

The words of the Spirit are the words of love. That which we call "the word of God" is specially the Spirit's word: and it overflows with love; love which, while it condemns the sin, presents pardon to the sinner; love which, while it spreads out before us "the exceeding sinfulness of sin," proclaims aloud, to the guiltiest of the guilty, free forgiveness and "deliverance from the wrath to come." The gospel of Christ contains in it the good news of the Spirit's love. "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost" (Matt 3:11) are the words in which is described the fitting out of men for preaching the good news; and in this baptism we have the manifestation of the Spirit's love. He baptizes because He loves. He sends out men to tell of His love; and the baptism with which He baptizes them is to fit them for this message of love. By this baptism the words of love are put into their lips; and these words are truly those of the Spirit Himself, from whatever lips they may come, by whatever pen they may be written down. They are the words of sincerity and truth. He means what He says when He sends out His servants with the language of love upon their tongues.

Hear some of His words of grace,-grace as boundless and as suitable as that of the Father and the Son; grace which has lost none of its largeness or freeness by the lapse of ages or the desperate resistance of human hearts:- "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies" (Psa 103:3,4); "O Lord, I will praise thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away" (Isa 12:1); "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found" (Isa 55:6); "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa 1:18); "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Eze 33:11); "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love" (Hosea 11:4); "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity" (Micah 7:18); "The Lord is good; a stronghold in the day of trouble" (Nahum 1:7); "How great is His goodness" (Zech 9:17). These are the Spirit's own words; and He writes them as the witness for God, the revealer of the divine character, the Unfolder of the love of Father, Son, and Spirit. They are the words of the Spirit, spoken before the Son of God came into the world to reveal and to embody in Himself the love of God to man. The New Testament is yet more abundant in its utterances of love: and in every one of them the Spirit has His part: till all is summed up in the wondrous words which time cannot weaken, and which long use cannot make stale: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev 22:17).

The Holy Spirit is no mere mechanical agent in the great work of a sinner's deliverance, and of the Church's upbuilding, obediently doing the work appointed to Him. "I delight to do Thy will" is as true of the Spirit as the Son. He loves the sinner; therefore He lays hold of him. He pities his misery; therefore He stretches out the hand of help. He has no pleasure in his death; therefore He puts forth His saving power. He is longsuffering and patient; therefore He strives with him day by day; and though "vexed," "resisted," "grieved," and "quenched," He refuses to retire from, or give up, any sinner on this side of eternity. The extent to which we resist Him, and the amount of His forbearing love, we cannot know. This only we may say, that our stubbornness is something infinitely fearful and malignant, while His patient grace passeth all understanding.

We are little alive to the injury we do to ourselves by any misunderstanding as to the mind and the work of the Spirit. The injustice which we do to Him is great; and the wrong which we inflict upon ourselves is no less so. No mistakes as to the Spirit's gracious character can be trivial or harmless. To regard Him as "austere," or "hard," or inaccessible, or needing to be persuaded to do His work in us, is to treat Him as at variance with the Father and the Son; slow to carry out the great purpose of divine love, in which purpose

the three Persons of the Godhead are equally concerned. To raise questions as to the riches of His grace is to misread Scripture, and to put a dark and false construction upon His testimony for Christ, as well as upon His dealings with the sons of men,-His dealings with those who have been saved, as well as with those who are lost. For what do the saved ones not owe to His love; and what would that love not have done for the lost, had they not stubbornly set it at nought to the last! "How often would I have gathered thy children" were the words which accompanied the tears of the Son of God over the rebellious city; and they are words equally expressive of the Spirit's feelings toward the stout-hearted of every age and nation.

Imperfect views of the Spirit's character may not be regarded by some as serious or fatal, but it is hardly possible that they can be entertained without exercising a darkening and deadening influence upon the soul: not in the same way as defective views of Christ's work affect us, but still with a most evil result both upon the conscience and the heart,-as if there were something in the Spirit which repelled us, whatever there might be in Christ to attract us; as if the light which the Cross throws upon the love of the Spirit were not quite in harmony with that which it reveals of the love of Christ; as if the Spirit were not always as ready with His help as is the Son.

All wrong thoughts of God, whether of Father, Son, or Spirit, must cast a shadow over the soul that entertains them. In some cases the shadow may not be so deep and cold as in others; but never can it be a trifle. And it is this that furnishes the proper answer to the flippant question so often asked, Does it really matter what a man believes? All defective views of God's character tell upon the life of the soul and the peace of the conscience. We must think right thoughts of God if we would worship Him as He desires to be worshipped; if we would live the life He wishes us to live, and enjoy the peace which He has provided for us.

The want of stable peace, of which so many complain, may arise from imperfect views of the Spirit's love. True, our peace comes from the work of the Substitute upon the cross, from the blood of the one sacrifice, from the sinbearing of Him who has made peace by the blood of the cross. But it is the Holy Spirit who glorifies Christ to us, and takes the scales from our eyes. If then we doubt His love, can we expect Him to reveal the Son in our hearts? Are we not thrusting Him away, and hindering that view of the peace-making which He only can give? Trust His love, and He will make known the Peacemaker to you. Trust His love, and He will show the precious blood by which the guiltiest conscience is purged, and the peace which passeth all understanding is imparted. He is the Spirit of peace, and His work is the work of peace. His office is to make known to us the Prince of Peace. Can there be peace without the recognition of the Holy Spirit's love? Can there fail to be peace when this is recognized and acted on? Doubts as to the love of the Spirit must inevitably intercept the peace which the peace-making cross presents to us.

Perhaps the want of faith, which we often mourn over, may arise from our not realizing the Spirit's love. "Faith [no doubt] cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God": yet it is the Holy Spirit who shines upon the word; it is He who gives the seeing eye and the hearing ear. Under the pressure of unbelief, have we fled to Him and appealed to His love? "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief," may be as aptly a cry to the Spirit as to the Son of God. He helpeth our infirmities; and in the infirmity of our faith He will most assuredly succour us. It is through Him that we become strong in faith; and He loves to impart the needed strength. He giveth to all men, liberally, and upbraideth not. Yet in our dealings with Him regarding faith, let us remember that He does not operate in some mystical or miraculous way, as if imparting to us a new faculty called faith; but by taking of the things of Christ and showing them to us; so touching our faculties by His mighty yet invisible hand, that, ere we are aware, these disordered souls of ours begin to work aright, and these dull eyes of ours begin to see what was all along before them, but what they never

had perceived, "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." Thus He works in us, often slowly and imperceptibly, but with divine power, making us to understand the gospel and to draw out of it that light and life which it contains for the dead and the dark. Looking at the cross, under the Spirit's enlightenment, we grow in faith. For never does He produce or increase faith in us without keeping our eye steadfastly fixed upon the great redeeming work of the incarnate Son. He is not the Spirit of unbelief or bondage, but of faith and liberty; and His desire is that we should be delivered from unbelief and bondage. He loves us too well to be indifferent to our remaining in distance or in distrust. He longs to see us children of faith, not of unbelief; to make us strong in faith; to remove whatever from within or without hinders its growth. Trust His love for the increase of faith; for deliverance from the evil heart of unbelief; for revealing to you the bright object of faith,-Christ, and "God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses." As truth is the foundation of faith, so, as "the Spirit of truth," He guides us out of error into truth, and thus leads us out of unbelief into faith; making us to see that the root of what we called our want of faith, was not that we were believing the right thing in a wrong way (as is so often said), but that we were not believing the right thing, but something else which could not bring rest to us in what way soever we might believe it.

Perhaps our want of joy may arise from our over-looking the love of the Spirit. Peace is one thing; joy is something more,- "joy unspeakable and full of glory." Assuredly He is the Spirit of joy, and as such delights to impart His joy. He who, by the lips of His Apostle, said, "Rejoice in the Lord always," wants to see you a joyful man. Will you trust Him for this? Will you rest in His love for this gift? Do not say, Joy is a secondary thing: a man may be a Christian without joy; some of the best of God's people have gone mourning all their days. These are poor excuses for not possessing what God wants you to possess, and what would make you ten times more useful to all around. God wishes you to be joyful. Your testimony to God is imperfect without joy. Cultivate joy; and in order to do so effectually, take firmer hold of the Spirit's power, and rest more implicitly in His love. He loves you too well to wish you to be gloomy. Be filled with the Spirit and you will be filled with joy. Joy is a great help in living a holy and consistent life. Holiness is joy, and joy is holiness. Accept the Spirit's love for both of these.

The "seal of the Spirit" (Eph 1:13); the "witness of the Spirit" (Rom 8:16); the "indwelling" of the Spirit (Rom 8:11); the "inworking" of the Spirit (Eph 1:19); the "help" of the Spirit (Rom 8:26); the "liberty" of the Spirit (2 Cor 3:17); the "strengthening" of the Spirit (Eph 3:16); the "fulness" of the Spirit (Eph 5:18); the "teaching" of the Spirit (John 14:26); the "baptism" of the Spirit (Mark 1:8);-all these are most closely connected with the "love of the Spirit"; and he who would separate them from that love, would rob them of all their meaning and power and consolation.

It is the loving Spirit that seals, and witnesses, and indwells, and inworks, and helps, and liberates, and strengthens, and teaches, and baptizes. So that in seeking these blessings we must ever remember that we are dealing with one whose love anticipates our longings, and on whose side there exists no hindrance to our possessing them all. Nowhere in Scripture has God led us to suppose that the Holy Spirit would be awanting to us in any time of need, or that we could be beforehand with Him in any desire of ours for any spiritual blessing. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" (Luke 11:13).

In our day, when that which is miraculous or supernatural is suspected or scorned, it is not easy even to gain a hearing for such truths. The Holy Spirit, we may say, is discarded as the most incredible part of the supernatural and impersonal. He Himself is regarded as an airy nothing, or as mist; and His direct and divine agency is treated as the dream of diseased enthusiasm. The removal of the supernatural from

religion means specially the removal of the Spirit. To retain Him personally in our theology is considered to be retaining the most incredible part of the supernatural,-the most visionary article in our creed.

Hence the need of bringing fully into view both His personality and His character. That modern unbelief should dislike the whole subject, and treat it as incompatible with reason, and therefore incapable of proof, as being wholly beyond the range of our senses, need not surprise us: nor would we attempt to meet Rationalism on its own ground. But what we say is this: Our information regarding the Holy Spirit must come wholly from revelation; and the question is, Does the Bible bear us out in the above statements? It certainly does seem to contain the doctrine we have been affirming. Its Author evidently meant us to accept that doctrine as true. If that doctrine cannot be true, it must be honestly struck out of the Bible; not by explaining texts away, or misinterpreting whole chapters, but by boldly affirming that Scripture is inaccurate. The words regarding the Spirit are too plain to be diluted into unmeaning figures. He who inspired the Bible has used language that cannot be mistaken. He has not left us in any doubt as to what He intended. Hence the quarrel of unbelief is a quarrel with revelation, and more specially with the Author of revelation. This is the real point at issue in these days, in the controversy with Rationalism.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit's person and work must stand or fall with the Bible. If it is incredible, then Scripture has utterly deceived us, and the God who made us has given us a book, as the revelation of divine truth, which contains what no man ought to believe or can believe. If the innumerable references to the Spirit be mere figures of speech,- Orientalisms,-meaning nothing real, then to accept them as literal, and to believe in a personal Spirit, must be pure fanaticism; and as to such a thing as the love of the Spirit, only visionaries or mystics would accept it.

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure; and the Word of God is true and real. Heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot or one tittle of what is written in Scripture cannot. What God has made known to us concerning the Spirit,-His wisdom, love, holiness, and power, remains unaltered throughout the ages; as true to us in these last days as it was in the beginning.

That the Holy Spirit is the producer in the human heart of everything that God calls religion, is beyond question to any one who accepts Bible statements as divinely true. He begins, carries on, and consummates in us all spiritual feeling, all spiritual worship, all spiritual life and energy. Nor can there be anything more hollow and unreal than religion without the Holy Spirit. That which is external and superficial,-which manifests itself in dress, and music, and routine service,-may flourish without Him; nay, can only flourish in His absence. But the deep and the real must be His work from first to last. The love of the Spirit is absolutely necessary to a religion of love, and liberty, and joy. Religiousness is at every man's command. Any man may get it up in a day; but religion cometh from above, and is the product of the Spirit dwelling and working in the heart.

The bustle of the present day hinders our discernment of this difference; nay, it grieves the Spirit provoking Him utterly to depart; thus leaving us with a hollowness of heart which yields no rest nor satisfaction, and which cannot be acceptable to God. "The Spirit of God," says Melancthon, "loves retirement and silence; it is then He penetrates into our hearts. The Bride of Christ does not take her stand in the streets and cross ways, but she leads her spouse into the house of her mother" (Song 8:2).

"The gifts of the Holy Ghost"! This is the Church's heritage (Acts 2:38,39). How far she has claimed it or used it is a serious question; but that this gift was meant for her in all ages is beyond a doubt. The whole book of the Acts of the Apostles is evidence of this. "My Spirit remaineth among you," is a promise for the

Church as truly as for Israel (Hag 2:5).

From the beginning it has been so; and the holy men raised up by God to speak His words or do His works were men "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Exo 31:2). It is this Spirit that has been the life of the Church. When He came, all was life; when He departed, all was death. Nothing was lacking so long as He was in the midst, and when He left nothing could compensate for His withdrawal. When He was present, the Church was the garden of the Lord; when He forsook her, every herb and flower of that garden withered.

Even in Old Testament days it was so; but since Pentecost, more largely and more powerfully. The indwelling and inworking Spirit, who is the promise of the Father and gift of the Son, is that which belongs to the Church of every age, little as she may have claimed or welcomed her peculiar glory.

"The gift" and "the gifts" are, both of them, expressions used in connection with the Spirit (Acts 8:20-10:45). He is one, yet manifold; called "the seven Spirits of God," and "the seven lamps of fire," and the "seven eyes," and the "seven horns" (Rev 3:1; 4:5; 5:6). He is not only spoken of in connection with each saint, but with the body, the Church universal, which is the "habitation of God, through the Spirit" (Eph 2:22); "the temple of the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19); and, as such, possessor of His love.

Such is the manifold fulness of the Spirit which as the gift of Christ, is the property of the whole Church of God. That fulness is not only the fulness of peace, and wisdom, and holiness, but of love. It is given her, not for herself only, but for the world out of which she has been called. She is to shine in the light of this love upon a dark earth. She is to pour out of the fulness which she receives upon a parched and needy world; out of her are to flow rivers of living water (John 7:38). Great is the world's need; but not greater than the provided supply: for the fountain of love, out of which the Church receives and pours this living water, is inexhaustible and divine.

The love of the Spirit is, like that of the Son, a love that passeth knowledge, a fountain whose waters fail not: "A pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev 22:1).

In the possession of this heavenly gift,-of these sevenfold gifts,-the Church is unspeakably rich, whatever her outward condition may be. Enjoying the fulness of this abiding Spirit, she manifests her character as the witness for Christ and as the light of the world. These gifts of the ascended Christ (Eph 4:8) made her what she was meant to be in the midst of the world's evil and of the powers of darkness, "a burning and shining light." In the power of such gifts she went forth to do battle with the idolatries and immoralities of heathendom. Boldly entering the cities of classic fame, she took possession of pagan temples and Jewish synagogues; and thousands everywhere, through apostolic preaching gathered round the throne.

It was not the gift of miracle, of healing, or of tongues, that did the work. These were not subordinate things, and in many places never used by the apostles. These were not "the best gifts" which we are commanded to covet (1 Cor 12:31). It was the fulness of spiritual power, possessed and exercised by holy men, awakening, quickening, sanctifying, that wrought the mighty changes which history records. It is well that we should look back to Pentecost, with wistful eyes, longing for a ministry of Pentecostal power, as the only remedy for the unbelief of the last days. But mere physical miracles are not the desirable things. The gifts of the Spirit, the Church's inalienable inheritance, are quite apart from bodily manifestations; and they remain with us still. But do we claim them? Do we use them? Do we not trust in other strength? Do we not lean on learning, on science, on talent, as if by these we were to fight and overcome? And, in so doing, do we not mistake our true position, and character, and mission? Nay, do we not grieve and quench

the Spirit?

Yet, the love of the Spirit is unquenchable. He is unwilling to depart. He despises not the day of small things; but He bids us look beyond and above them. Formalism, routine, and external religion, the excitements of mysticism,-these are poor substitutes for the life, and glow, and energy of the Holy Spirit. Nothing but His own presence can avail to lift us out of the unreal religiousness into which we have fallen; to transform creeds into realities, and the bodily bowing of the head, or bending of the knee, into spiritual worship; turning the "dim religious light" into the sunshine of a heavenly noon; drawing out of our hymnals the deep heart-music of divine and blessed song; delivering us alike from Rationalism and Ritualism, from a hollow externalism, and from an impulsive and unreasoning fanaticism. It is His presence only that can vitalize ordinances; clothe ministry with power; unite the broken Church; fill the void of aching hearts; impart to service, liberty and gladness; ward off error; and make truth mighty,-filling our sanctuaries with living worshippers, and sending forth men of might to preach the everlasting gospel; and to proclaim, as in primitive days, the Christ that has come, and the Christ that is to come again.

He has come, in His love, to quicken the dead in sin; and He is daily moving upon the face of the waters,-bringing life out of death. Nor is His arm shortened, that it cannot save.

He has come, in His love, to give light for darkness. Nor is there any human heart too dark for Him to illumine. He lights up souls. He lights up Churches. He lights up lands, making them that sit in darkness to see a great light.

He has come, in His love, to gather in the wanderers, far and near. No strayed one has gone too far into the wilderness for Him to follow and to bring back. The "ends of the earth" form the vast region into which His love has gone forth to seek, and find, and save.

He has come, in His love, to guide the doubting heart. He takes lovingly and gently the hand of the perplexed and inquiring, and leads them into the way of peace. He knows all their troubles and fears, so that they need not fear being misunderstood. He teaches their ignorance and shows them their mistakes, and points their eye to the cross.

He has come, in His love, to bind up the broken-hearted. His name is the Comforter, and His consolations are as abundant as they are everlasting. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," are the words which he has written down for every sorrowful one (Isa 40:1). In all trial, bereavement, pain, sorrow, let us realize the love of the Spirit. That love comes out most brightly and most tenderly in the day of mourning. In the chamber of sickness or of death, let us find strength and peace in the presence, companionship, and sympathy of the gracious Spirit.

He has come down, in His love, to seek after the backslider. From a heart that once owned Him, He has been driven out, and He has retired sorrowfully. But He has not ceased to desire a return to His old abode. He still pities, and yearns, and beseeches. "Turn, ye backsliding children, for I am married unto you," are His words of longing and pity.

He has come, in His love, even to the mis-believing and the deluded, seeking to remove the mists with which a rebellious intellect has compassed itself about; and to lead them out into life, and love, and day. They are groping for an idea; and He brings them into contact with a Person, even God Himself. They are crying vaguely for knowledge; and He presents to them the wisdom deposited in the Person of the Word made flesh. They are in search of sympathy for their wounded hearts; and He places Himself before them

in the fulness of His all-sympathizing love. They are asking for a creed of certainty and perfection, on which their faith may rest; He offers Himself to them as a living and unerring Teacher,-the Author of an infallible Book, all whose pages sparkle with the love of its loving Author. They crave beauty in worship, something to please the eye,-aesthetic beauty, as they call it! He draws the eye to Him who is "the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely."

He has come, in His love, to build up His own. He seeks to fill, with His holy presence, the soul into which He has come. He wants, not a part of the man, but the whole,-body, soul, and spirit,-the entire being, that it may be altogether conformed to Himself. He has come to His temples, and His purpose is to make them in reality, what they are in name, the "habitation of God, the temples of the Holy Ghost."

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/horatius-bonar/the-gospel-of-the-holy-spirits-love/>

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