

Preface

A man is no bigger than his prayer life, or as Murray M'Cheyne is reputed to have said, "What a man is on his knees before God, that he is—and nothing more." In that coming day when the hearts of men are revealed, a day which is now nearer than when we first believed, there will be some "big men" who will appear very small, and some we had thought small will appear as spiritual giants. How different are spiritual values when God takes them from the balances of human judgment and weighs them on the balances of the sanctuary.

The swift and powerful movement of the Spirit recorded in Acts was not only initiated by prayer, but fed and sustained by prayer. In a day when God has begun to pour out His Spirit upon His people, even as He promised, we should expect to see among them a new "spirit of grace and supplication." However powerful the initial coming upon us of the Spirit may be, if this does not find expression in a life of prayer the blessing will soon become a fading glory. A movement of God will last as long as the Spirit of prayer that inspired it.

The result of the Holy Spirit coming upon a believer should be that he is introduced to *life in the Spirit*. In this new dimension every spiritual activity is energized and controlled by the Spirit of God. Living in the Spirit includes praying in the Spirit. Any claim to a baptism or filling with the Spirit which leaves our prayer life unaffected must be at best a superficial work, for the Holy Spirit of promise is an indwelling intercessor. He comes to each heart open to Him with a deep longing to find there another channel through which to effect this powerful ministry.

This is not intended to be a general book on prayer. It concentrates on the ministry of the Holy Spirit in relation to prayer. It investigates the deeper meaning of that apostolic injunction, "Pray in the Spirit." It analyzes our many weaknesses in prayer and the spiritual and practical difficulties we encounter, and shows how the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness and makes up for all our deficiency. It encourages us to yield ourselves to Him and allow Him to pray through us. We need have no fear that this will make us unbalanced or extreme. The more fully we submit to the Holy Spirit the more Christ-centered we become, and the more truly God is glorified in us.

What tremendous possibilities there are when we have plunged into that river of the Spirit which is full of water. Here are "waters to swim in." Prayer in the Spirit suggests new avenues waiting to be explored, new resources to be tapped, new power to be released. And when we have begun to enter into all that is opened up

in these pages, we shall realize, reader and author alike, how much there is of “the deep things of God” still waiting to be discovered.

There the Lord in majesty will be for us a place of broad rivers and streams, where no galley with oars can go [no room here for human energy], nor stately ship can pass [no place for fleshly show or ostentation]. (Isa. 33:21)

May God use this book to help us to launch out.

Arthur Wallis

But How?

SHE was young, she was of lowly birth and, what made it even more perplexing, she was unmarried. Could she have heard right? Chosen by heaven to be the mother of the long-awaited Messiah? Doubt, fear, perplexity struggled within her. Turning to the angel, Mary asked a simple, practical question: “How can this be?” (Luke 1:34) Just as simple was Gabriel’s answer: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you” (Luke 1:35).

“How?” is a question that the believer is forever asking, even if only deep in the heart. To our every “How?” heaven gives the same answer as Gabriel gave to Mary—“The Holy Spirit.”

Is it a question of how we may know the will of God in our lives? “All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (Rom. 8:14). Are we concerned to know the secret of victory over sin? “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2). Have we difficulty in understanding the Scriptures? “The Holy Spirit . . . will teach you all things” (John 14:26). “The Spirit of truth . . . will guide

you into all the truth” (John 16:13). Is it the problem of how to witness effectively for the Lord? “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses” (Acts 1:8).

Perhaps the fact that you have picked up a book on the subject of prayer is an indication that you want to know *how to pray* effectively, how to prevail in prayer. “The Spirit helps us in our weakness,” replies the apostle. “The Spirit Himself intercedes for us” (Rom. 8:26). The gracious ministry of the Holy Spirit is God’s complete answer to all our weakness, ignorance and inability in the realm of prayer.

In the Upper Room discourse (John 14–16) our Lord gave His followers their fullest unfolding of the promised Holy Spirit. In five great declarations He revealed what the Holy Spirit was to be to them and to do for them. It is significant that in the same passage we find some five or six great prayer promises. It was through the Holy Spirit that they would find the prayer promises fulfilled. Further, the distinctive title our Lord gave to the Holy Spirit was “The Comforter” or “The Advocate,” a title that would have suggested to the disciples a ministry of intercession. Our Lord wanted them to know that the Holy Spirit was an intercessor, and that He would accomplish this ministry in them.

The early church was without doubt a praying church, and what tremendous things they accomplished through prayer alone: prison doors were opened, fanatical opponents were struck down and converted to Christ, signs

and wonders were done. But the open secret was that the early church knew the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, not theoretically but experientially. Those first believers were mighty in prayer because they were mighty in the Spirit.

We have only to scan the pages of Acts to discover that the early church met and overcame every great crisis in their early history with the weapon of “all prayer.” Read, in Acts 4, that account of the first recorded prayer meeting of the young Jerusalem church for an example of anointed praying. What boldness! What power! What authority! Little wonder the place where they were assembled was shaken and they were all filled anew with the Holy Spirit. So the enduement of the Spirit was both the cause and the consequence of their effectual praying. They prayed because they were filled, and they were filled because they prayed. A victorious circle!

In a day when an increasing number of God’s children are recognizing the necessity of a vital encounter with the Holy Spirit, let us always keep before us this prayer aspect of the Spirit-filled life. In Ezekiel’s vision (chapter 47) the waters that flowed out of the sanctuary were at first “ankle-deep,” which suggests walking in the Spirit; and then “knee-deep,” which suggests praying in the Spirit. There is a serious deficiency in the outworking of the Spirit-filled life if it does not result in a revitalizing experience in the realm of prayer.

When the Lord met with me in this way some years ago, He touched many realms of my spiritual life, but

none more deeply and permanently than my prayer life, though I realize there is still a long way to go. If someone should ask, “How do you know what spirit came upon you?” I would reply, “By the fruit produced. I soon discovered that the Spirit that had come upon me was an interceding Spirit.”

“Praying in the Spirit” summarizes in a phrase the New Testament norm for the believer’s prayer life. This in turn assumes a definite reception of the Spirit in fullness and power. Our blessed Lord knew this experience, and so did those apostles and believers of the early churches. Everywhere the New Testament writers take it for granted (as they do baptism in water) that their readers have known this rich experience of the Holy Spirit coming upon them (Titus 3:5–6). Today, sadly, it cannot be so readily assumed. But without such an experience what follows in this book will be largely theoretical and unreal.

I would invite the reader who is unconvinced of the necessity of such a definite experience, but who is open to the testimony of God’s Word, to carry out a simple investigation. With the help of a concordance examine all the references in the New Testament to being filled with the Spirit, and see whether there is not overwhelming evidence that this is a distinct and definite encounter with the Holy Spirit, and that those who experienced it in New Testament times knew when and how the Holy Spirit had come. Paul could never have asked the Galatians, “Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?” if their experience of receiving

the Spirit had not been at least as clearly defined as their experience of receiving Christ.

Let others who, though convinced of the scripturalness and importance of it, are still strangers to the experience, come with purity of heart, cleanness of hands, and simplicity of faith to the risen Lord. He is still calling out, "If any man thirst let him come to Me and drink." So come and drink, for the promise is to you.