

THE OUT-POURING OF THE SPIRIT.

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THE ESSENTIAL FEATURE OF PREPARATION FOR IT.

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"AND when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." Acts 2: 1. The Emphatic Diaglott renders this: "They were all with *one mind* in the same place." It seems that this oneness of mind, this unity of purpose, was absolutely necessary before the especial power of God in its fullness could consistently or safely be manifest among them. Had it come upon them without it, each would have been confirmed in his own ideas as right, because of the witnessing power of the Holy Spirit present in himself. It is important to notice that possession by the Holy Spirit (which is necessarily the same thing as having the mind of Christ, for Christ dwells in us by his Spirit. Rom. 8: 9-11), except when manifest in the gift of prophecy, does not destroy personal identity or responsibility; for we read, at a time when the Holy Spirit was possessed by the church in its fullness: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, *and to us.*" Acts 15: 28. Then having the mind of Christ cannot mean to have *no mind of one's own*, but possessing a mind perfectly in harmony with the mind of Christ—having a will to do his will, or a mind and will which *co-operate* with Christ's mind and will. The exception to this rule in the exercise of the gift of prophecy is, without doubt, that which constitutes that gift "the best gift." As a person in vision has absolutely no control of his own mind, the physical and mental faculties being under the direct and complete control of the Spirit of God, this gift must be superior to any of the others in the exercise of which the human will and faculties do have a part.

How were the disciples brought to this oneness of mind, then? Evidently by the precept and example of Christ, who had been to them, in reality, the Holy Spirit—the representative of God—the "teacher of righteousness" for three and a half years, together with their own experience in connection therewith. He had been *with* them, but not *in* them in the sense that he promised to be by his Spirit, when they had, through trying experience, learned the lessons they needed to fit them for *his fullness*.

Before his crucifixion they had reasoned among themselves as to which should be greatest; on the night of his betrayal they were scattered, and all denied him; but he had prayed "that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they all may be one in us," and this prayer must be answered before he can safely let his full power and blessing rest upon them.

Power, even the power of faith, is a dangerous thing unless directed and controlled by that best of all principles--*love*. This he had tried to teach them upon many occasions, especially as they returned from their wonderful success in healing the sick and casting out devils through faith in his name, and when they had so confidently affirmed that they would not deny him. On one occasion he had plainly said to them, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of;" and on another, "All ye shall be offended because of me;" but they did not comprehend his meaning until they had passed through the *experience* which revealed to them their weakness and lack of love.

The close question, three times repeated to Peter, "Simon [one who hears], son of Jonas [a dove], *lovest thou me?*" evidently was not intended for Peter alone, as it was asked in the presence of the other disciples as well. Neither was it intended for those who heard him upon that occasion alone, but for all, to the end of time, who might be in danger of mistaking, as they had done, the *possession of faith* for the

perfection and abiding strength which is only obtained through the *union of faith and love*—the "gold tried in the fire."

The evidence of this love to him is the oneness between his disciples; for, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" 1 John 4: 20. When this love was really developed among the disciples, the false-hearted had been separated from the true, and they were prepared for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the "early rain"—the especial manifestation of the power of God on the day of Pentecost. Can it be otherwise in the outpouring of his Spirit in the "latter rain" in the last days?

How is this oneness to be accomplished now?—Certainly, just as before, by giving heed to the "teacher" which God has so mercifully given us for the past forty years and more—the living gift of prophecy. It has been with us as Christ was *with* the disciples, but has not been *in* us, as we have not comprehended its teaching any more fully than the disciples did his.

The lack of oneness among God's people in the last days will be largely the result of the erroneous and confused doctrines which are accepted through the union of his people with Babylon. Then to correct this lack of oneness, the *erroneous* must be seen and rejected, and the *true* sought out and accepted. Will God give a special revelation for this purpose?—No, except in case of serious division; for the Bible contains it all, and must be studied by every individual *for himself*. But here is the difficulty; *to understand the Bible alike*. Must the individuality, or the individual responsibility he surrendered or ignored?—No, it must (to use the parallel) "seem good to the Holy Ghost *and to us*." And how?—By taking what the "teacher" has said, believing and practicing it.

The Lord makes no mistakes. The mistakes are on the human side. When the work of bringing out the especial truths for this time began in its simplicity, a half century ago, it was attended by his especial blessing, and marked by the genuine spirit of unity and love. The Spirit of God, "the teacher," tells us now that the same principles should be brought into all Scripture investigation today. Upon this point from an article by Mrs. E. G. White, in the REVIEW of July 26, 1892, headed, "Search the Scriptures," I quote as follows:—

"How shall we search the Scriptures? Shall we drive our stakes of doctrine one after another, and then try to make all Scripture meet our established opinions, or shall we take our ideas and views to the Scriptures, and measure our theories on every side by the Scriptures of truth? Many who read and even teach the Bible, do not comprehend the precious truth they are teaching or studying. . . . As we take up the study of God's word, we should do so with humble hearts. All selfishness, all love of originality, should be laid aside. .

"Those who sincerely desire truth will not be reluctant to lay open their positions for investigation and criticism, and will not be annoyed if their opinions and ideas are crossed. This was the spirit cherished among us forty years ago. We would come together burdened in soul, praying that we might be one in faith and doctrine; for we knew that Christ is not divided. One point at a time was made the subject of investigation. Solemnity characterized these councils of investigation. The Scriptures were opened with a sense of awe. Often we fasted, that we might be better fitted to understand the truth. After earnest prayer, if any point was not understood, it was discussed, and each one expressed his opinion freely; then we would again bow in prayer, and earnest supplications went up to heaven that God would help us to see eye to eye, that we might be one, as Christ and the Father are one. Many tears were shed. If one

brother rebuked another for his dullness of comprehension in not understanding a passage as he understood it, the one rebuked would afterward take his brother by the hand, and say, 'Let us not grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Jesus is with us; let us keep a humble and teachable spirit;' and the brother addressed would say, 'Forgive me, brother, I have done you an injustice.' Then we would bow down in another season of prayer. We spent many hours in this way. We did not generally study together more than four hours at a time, yet sometimes the entire night was spent in solemn investigation of the Scriptures, that we might understand the truth for our time. On some occasions the Spirit of God would come upon me, and difficult portions were made clear through God's appointed way, and then there was perfect harmony. We were all of one mind and one Spirit.

"We sought most earnestly that the Scriptures should not be wrested to suit any man's opinions. We tried to make our differences as slight as possible by not dwelling on points that were of minor importance, upon which there were varying opinions. But the burden of every soul was to bring about a condition among the brethren which would answer the prayer of Christ that his disciples might be one as he and the Father are one. Sometimes one or two of the brethren would stubbornly set themselves against the view presented, and would act out the natural feelings of the heart; but when this disposition appeared, we suspended our investigations and adjourned our meeting, that each one might have an opportunity to go to God in prayer, and without conversation with others, study the point of difference, asking light from heaven. With expressions of friendliness we parted, to meet again as soon as possible for further Investigation. At times the power of God came upon us in a marked manner, and when clear light revealed the points of truth, we would weep and rejoice together. We loved Jesus; we loved one another.

"In those days God wrought for us, and the truth was precious to our souls. It is necessary that our unity today be of a character that will bear the test of trial. We are in the school of the Master here, that we may be trained for the school above. We must learn to bear disappointment in a Christ-like manner, and the lesson taught by this will be of great importance to us.

"We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed. As long as we hold to our own ideas and opinions with determined persistency, we cannot have the unity for which Christ prayed."

Let us conscientiously carry out the instruction.