

**THE SUPERLATIVE EXCELLENCE
OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
NO. 574**

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 12, 1864,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“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.”
John 16:7.*

THE saints of God may very justly reckon their losses among their greatest gains. The adversities of believers minister much to their prosperity. Although we know this, through the infirmity of the flesh we tremble at soul-enriching afflictions, and dread to see those black ships which bring us such freights of golden treasure. When the Holy Spirit sanctifies the furnace, the flame refines our gold and consumes our dross, yet the dull ore of our nature likes not the glowing coals, and had rather lie quiet in the dark mines of earth. As silly children cry because they are called to drink the medicine which will heal their sicknesses, even so do we. Our gracious Savior, however, loves us too wisely to spare us the trouble because of our childish fears; He foresees the advantage which will spring from our griefs, and therefore thrusts us into them out of wisdom and true affection. It was a very great trouble to these first apostles to lose their teacher and friend. Sorrow had filled their hearts at the thought that He should depart, but yet His departure was to give them the greater blessing of the Holy Spirit; and therefore their entreaties and tears cannot avert the dreaded separation. Christ will not gratify their wishes at so vast an expense as the withholding of the Spirit. Mourn as they may under the severe trial, Jesus will not remain with them because His departure is expedient in the highest degree. Beloved, let us expect to be subject to the same loving discipline; let us reckon upon losing happy frames and choice enjoyments when Jesus knows that the loss will be better for us than the enjoyment.

God has given two great gifts to His people—the first is, *His Son for us*; the second is, *His Spirit to us*. After He had given His Son for us, to become incarnate, to work righteousness, and to offer atonement—after that gift had been fully bestowed, there remained no more to be conferred in that respect. “It is finished!” proclaimed the completion of atonement, and His resurrection showed the perfection of justification. It was not therefore, necessary that Christ should remain any longer upon earth since His work below is forever finished. Now is the season for the second gift, the descent of the Holy Spirit. This could not be bestowed until Christ had ascended, because this choice favor was reserved to grace with highest honor the triumphant ascension of the Great Redeemer. “When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” This was, as Peter tells us, the great promise which Jesus received of His Father. “Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has shed forth this, which you now see and hear.” That His triumphal entrance into heaven might be stamped with signal glory, the gifts of the Spirit of God could not be scattered among the sons of men until the Lord had gone up with a shout, even the Lord with the sound of trumpet. The first gift being completed, it became necessary that He, whose person and work make up that priceless gift, should withdraw Himself that He might have power to distribute the second benefit by which alone the first gift becomes of any service to us. Christ Crucified is of no practical value to us without the work of the Holy Spirit; and the atonement which Jesus worked can never save a single soul unless the blessed Spirit of God shall apply it to the heart and conscience! Jesus is never seen until the Holy Spirit opens the eyes—the water from the Well of Life is never received until the Holy Spirit has drawn it from the depths. As medicine unused for lack of the physician’s word; as sweets untasted because out of reach; as treasure unvalued because hidden in the earth; such is Jesus the Savior, until the Holy Spirit teaches us to know Him, and applies His blood to our souls.

It is to the honor of the Holy Spirit that I desire to speak this morning, and O, may the same hallowed flame which of old sat upon the apostles, now rest upon the preacher, and may the Word come with power to our hearts!

I. We shall commence our discourse by the remark that **THE BODILY PRESENCE OF CHRIST MUST HAVE BEEN EXCEEDINGLY PRECIOUS.** *How* precious those alone can tell who much love Christ. Love always desires to be in the company of the thing beloved, and absence causes grief. What is fully meant by the expression, “Sorrow has filled your heart,” those only can know, who anticipate a like painful bereavement. Jesus had become the joy of their eyes, the sun of their days, the star of their nights—like the spouse, as she came up from the wilderness—they leaned upon their beloved. They were as little children, and now that their Lord and Master was going, they felt they would be left orphans. Well might they have great sorrow of heart! So much love, so much sorrow, when the object of love is withdrawn. Judge, my brethren, the joy which the bodily presence of Christ would give to us this morning, and then you can tell how precious it must be! Have we not, some of us, been looking for years for the personal Advent of Christ? We have lifted up our eyes in the morning, and we have said, “Perhaps He will come today,” and when the day has closed we have continued our watching in our sleepless hours, and renewed our hopes with the rising of the sun. We longingly expect Him according to His promise; and like men who watch for their Lord, we stand with loins girt about waiting for His appearing. We are looking for and hastening unto the Day of the Lord. This is the bright hope which cheers the Christian, the hope that the Savior shall gloriously descend to reign among His people! Suppose He were to appear suddenly on this platform now—how you would clap your hands! Why, the lame among you would, at the joy of His appearance, leap like a hart, and even the dumb might sing for joy! The presence of the Master! What rapture! Come quickly! Come quickly, Lord Jesus! It must be, indeed, a precious thing to enjoy the real presence of Christ!

Think of the advantage it would be in the instruction of His people. No mystery need puzzle us if we could refer all to Him. The disputes of the Christian Church would soon be ended for He would tell us what His Word meant beyond dispute. There would be no discouragement to the church in her work of faith and labor of love, for the presence of Christ would be the end of all difficulties, and insure conquest over all enemies. We would not have to mourn as we now do over our forgetfulness of Jesus, for we should sometimes have a look at Him; and a sight of Him would give us a store of joy, so that like the Prophet of Horeb, we could go 40 days in the strength of that meat! It were a delightful thing to know that Christ was somewhere upon earth, for then He would take the personal supervision of His universal Church. He could warn us of apostates; He could reject the hypocrites; He would comfort the feeble-minded, and rebuke the erring. How delightful would it be to see Him walking among the golden candlesticks, holding the stars in His right hand! Churches need not, then, be subdivided and torn with evil passions. Christ would create unity. Schism would cease to be, and heresy would be rooted out. The presence of Jesus, whose countenance is as the sun shining in its strength, would ripen all the fruits of our garden, consume all the weeds, and quicken every plant! The two-edged sword of His mouth would slay His foes, and His eyes of fire would kindle the holy passions of His friends.

But I shall not enlarge upon that point because it is one in which fancy exercises itself at the expense of judgment. I question whether the pleasure which the thought of Christ’s being here in the flesh has given us, just now, may not have had a leaven of carnality in it. I question whether the church is yet prepared to enjoy the actual presence of her Savior without falling into the error of knowing Him after the flesh. It may be it shall need centuries of education before the church is fit to see her Savior in the flesh on earth again, because I see in my own self—and I suppose it is so in you—that much of the delight which I expect from the company of Christ is according to the sight of the eyes, and the judgment of the mind—and sight is ever the mark and symbol of the flesh.

II. However, leaving that point, we come to the second, which is **THAT THE PRESENCE OF THE COMFORTER, AS WE HAVE IT UPON EARTH, IS VERY MUCH BETTER THAN THE BODILY PRESENCE OF CHRIST.**

We have fancied that the bodily presence of Christ would make us blessed, and confer innumerable benefits; but according to our text, the presence of the Holy Spirit working in the Church is more expedient for the Church! I think this will be clear to you, if you think for a moment, that the bodily presence

of Christ on earth, however good it might be for the Church, would in our present condition involve many inconveniences which are avoided by His presence through the Holy Spirit. Christ, being most truly Man, must as to His Manhood inhabit a certain place, and in order to get to Christ, it would be necessary for us to travel to His place of residence. Conceive all men compelled to travel from the ends of the earth to visit the Lord Jesus Christ, dwelling upon Mount Zion, or in the city of Jerusalem. What a lengthened voyage would that be for those who live in the far-off ends of the world! Doubtless, they would joyfully undertake it, and as peace would be universal, and poverty be banished, men might not be restrained from taking such a journey, but might all be able to accomplish it? As they could not all live where they could every morning see Christ, they must be content with every now and then getting a glimpse of Him. But, my brethren, the Holy Spirit, the Vicar of Christ, dwells everywhere! And if we wish to apply to the Holy Spirit, we have no need to move an inch; we can find Him in the closet, or in the streets we can talk with Him. Jesus Christ could not be present in this congregation after the flesh, and yet present in a neighboring church, much less present in America, and in Australia, and in Europe, and in Africa, at the same time. But the Holy Spirit is everywhere! And through that Holy Spirit, Christ keeps His promise, "Where two or three are met together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." He could not keep that promise according to the *flesh*—at least we are quite unable to conceive of His doing so; but through the Holy Spirit we sweetly enjoy His presence, and hope to do so to the world's end.

Think again—access to Christ—if He were here in His personality, would not be very easy to all believers. There are only 24 hours in the day, and if our Lord never slept, if, as a Man, He could still live and, like the saints above, rest not day nor night, yet there are only the 24 hours; and what were 24 hours for the supervision of a church which we trust will cover the whole earth? How could a thousand millions of believers all receive immediate personal comfort, either from His lips or the smiles of His face? Even at the present moment there are some millions of true saints upon earth—what could one man do by his personal presence—even though that one man were Incarnate Deity? What could He do in one day for the comfort of all of these? Why, we could not possibly expect each one of us to see Him every day—no, we could scarcely expect to have our turn once in the year! But, beloved, we can now see Jesus every hour, and every moment of every hour! So often as you bow the knee, His Spirit, who represents Him, can commune with you, and bless you. No matter whether it is in the dead of night that your cry goes up, or under the blaze of burning noon—there is the Spirit waiting to be gracious, and your sighs and cries climb up to Christ in heaven, and return with answers of peace! These difficulties did not occur to you, perhaps, in your first thoughts; but if you meditate awhile, you will see that the presence of the Spirit, avoiding that difficulty, makes Christ accessible to every saint at all times; not to a few choice favorites, but to every believing man and woman the Holy Spirit is accessible, and thus the whole body of the faithful can enjoy present and perpetual communion with Christ!

We ought to consider yet once more, that Christ's presence in the flesh upon earth, for any other purpose than that of ending the present dispensation, would involve another difficulty. Of course every word which Christ had spoken from the time of the apostles until now would have been inspired; being inspired it would have been a thousand pities that it should fall to the ground. Busy scribes would therefore be always taking down Christ's Words; and, my brethren, if in the short course of three years our Savior managed to do, and to say so much that one of the evangelists informs us, that if all had been written the world itself could not have contained the books which would have been written—I ask you to imagine what a mass of literature the Christian Church would have acquired, if she had preserved the words of Christ throughout these one 1864 years! Certainly we would not have had the Word of God in the simple compact form of a pocket Bible—it would have consisted of innumerable volumes of the sayings and deeds of the Lord Jesus Christ! Only the studious, no, not even the studious, could have read all the Lord's teachings, and the poor and the illiterate would always be at a great disadvantage. But now, we have a book which is finished within a narrow compass with not another line to be added to it; the canon of Revelation is sealed up forever, and the poorest man in England, believing in Christ, going with a humble soul to that book, and looking up to Jesus Christ who is present through His Spirit, though not after the flesh, may, in a short time comprehend the doctrines of grace, and understand with all saints what are the heights, and depths, and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. So

then, on the score of inconvenience, precious as the bodily presence of Christ might be, it is infinitely better for the Church's good that, until the day of her millennial glory, Christ should be present by His Spirit, and not in the flesh.

Yet more, my beloved! If Jesus Christ were still present with His Church in the flesh, *the life of faith* would not have such room for its display as it now has. The more there is visible to the eyes, the less room for faith—the least faith, the most show. The Romish Church, which has little enough of true faith, provides everything to work upon the *senses*—your nostrils are regaled with incense, and your ears are delighted with sweet sounds. The more faith grows, the less it needs outward helps; and when faith shows her true character, and is clean divorced from sense and sight, then she needs absolutely nothing to rest upon but the invisible power of God! She then has learned to hang as the world hangs—upon no seen support; just as the eternal arch of yon blue sky springs right up without props, so faith rests upon the invisible pillars of God's truth and faithfulness, needing nothing to shore or buttress her. The presence of Christ Jesus here in bodily flesh, and the knowing of Him according to the flesh, would be the bringing back of the saints to a life of sight, and in a measure spoil the simplicity of naked trust. You remember the apostle Paul says, "We now know no man after the flesh. Yes," he says, "though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now after the flesh know we Him no more." To the skeptic, who might ask us, "Why do you believe in Christ?" if Jesus had remained upon the earth, we could always give an easy answer—"There He is—there is the Man; behold Him as He still continues to work miracles!" There would be very little room for faith's holy adherence to the bare Word of God, and no opportunity for her to glorify God, trusting where she cannot trace. But now, beloved, the fact that we have nothing visible to point to which carnal minds can understand—this very fact makes the path of faith more truly congenial with its noble character—

*"Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to that alone,"*

which she could not do, if she could look upon the visible person of a present Savior. Happy day will it be for us when faith enjoys the full fruition of her hopes in the triumphant advent of her Lord; but His absence, alone, can train and educate her to the needed point of spiritual refinement.

Furthermore, the presence of Jesus Christ on earth would materially affect the character of God's great battle against error and sin. Suppose that Christ were to destroy the preachers of error by miracle; suppose that persecuting monarchs had their arms dried up, or that all men who would oppose Christ were suddenly devoured by fire, why then it would be more a battle between physical greatness and moral evil, than a warfare in which only spiritual force is employed on the side of right. But now that Christ has gone, the fight is all between Spirit and spirit—between God the Holy Spirit and Satan—between the truth of God and error; between the earnestness of believing men, and the infatuation of unbelieving men. Now the fight is fair! We have no miracles on our side—we do not need them—the Holy Spirit is enough! We call no fire from heaven—no earthquake shakes the ground beneath our enemies' feet. Korah is not swallowed up; Dathan does not go down alive into the Pit. Physical force is left to our enemies—we do not ask for it. Why? Because by the divine working we can vanquish error without it; in the name of the Holy One of Israel, in whose cause we have been enlisted—by *His* might we are enough without miracles, and signs, and wonders. If Christ were still here working miracles, the battle would not be as spiritual as it now is; but the absence of the bodily Savior makes it a spiritual conflict of spirit of the noblest and most sublime order!

Again, dear friends, the Holy Spirit is more valuable to the Church in her present militant state than the presence of Christ could be conceived to be, because Christ must be here in one of two ways—either He must be here suffering, or not suffering. If Christ were here suffering, then how could we conclude that His atonement was finished? Is it not much better for our faith that our blessed Lord, having once and for all made expiation for sin, should sit at the right hand of the Father? Is it not much better, I ask, than to see Him still struggling and suffering here below? "Oh, but," you say, "perhaps, He would not suffer!" Then I pray you, do not wish to have Him here till our warfare is accomplished, for to see an unsuffering Christ in the midst of His suffering people—to see His face calm and clear when yours and mine are wrinkled with grief—to see Him smiling when we are weeping, this were intolerable! No, it could not be! Brethren, if He is a suffering Christ in our sight, then we would suspect that He had not

finished His work; and, on the other hand, if He is an unsuffering Christ, then it would look as if He were not a faithful High Priest made like unto His brethren. These two difficulties throw us back into a state of thankfulness to God that we have not the dilemma to answer, but that the Spirit of God, who is Christ present on earth, relieves us from these difficulties, and gives us all the advantage we could expect from Christ's presence in a tenfold degree.

Only this one further remark, that the personal presence of Christ, much as we think of it, did not produce very great results in His disciples until the Spirit was poured forth from on high! Christ was their Teacher—how much did they learn? Why, there is Philip—Christ has to say to him, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?” They were puzzled by questions which little children can now answer! You can see that at the end of their three years course of training with Christ, they had made but little progress. Christ is not only their Teacher, but their Comforter—yet how frequently Christ failed to console them because of their unbelief! After He had uttered that delightful discourse which we have been reading, He found them sleeping for sorrow. In this very chapter, when He is trying to comfort them, He adds, “But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your heart.” Christ's objective was to foster the graces of His disciples—but where were their graces? Here is Peter—he has not even the grace of courage and consistency, but denies his Master while the rest of them forsake Him and flee! There was not even the Spirit of Christ infused into them! Their zeal was not tempered with love, for they wanted fire from heaven to consume His adversaries, and Peter drew a sword to cut off the High Priest's servant's ear! They scarcely knew the truths which their Master taught, and they were far from imbibing His heavenly Spirit. Even their endowments were slender. It is true they once worked miracles and preached, but with what success? Do you ever hear of Peter winning 3,000 sinners under a sermon till the Holy Spirit came? Do you find any of them able to edify others, and build up the Church of Christ? No, the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, considered only as to its immediate fruits, was not to be compared with ministries after the descent of the Spirit. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” His great work as a Redeemer was a complete triumph from beginning to end; but as a Teacher, since the Spirit of God was only upon *Him*, and not upon the people, His words were rejected, His entreaties were despised, and His warnings unheeded by the great multitude of the people. The mighty blessing came when the words of Joel were fulfilled, “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out My Spirit.” That was the blessing, and a blessing which, we venture to say again, was so rich and so rare, that it was indeed expedient, that Jesus Christ should go, that the Holy Spirit might descend.

III. I now pass on to the third point of the subject with brevity. We have come thus far—the presence of Christ admitted to be precious, but the presence of the Holy Spirit most clearly shown to be of more practical value to the Church of God than the bodily presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Advance then to the third point, THE PRESENCE OF THE COMFORTER IS SUPERLATIVELY VALUABLE. We may gather this first from the effects which were seen upon the day of Pentecost. On the day of Pentecost the heavenly wind sounded the alarm of war. The soldiers were ill prepared for it; they were a slender band, having only this virtue—they were content to wait until power was given to them. They sat still in the upper room. That mighty sound was heard across Jerusalem. The forceful whirlwind travels on until it reaches the chosen spot. It fills the place where they are sitting. Here was an omen of what the Spirit of God is to be to the Church! It is to come mysteriously upon the Church according to the sovereign will of God; but when He comes like the wind, it is to purge the moral atmosphere, and to quicken the pulse of all who spiritually breathe. This is a blessing indeed, a gift which the Church greatly needs; I would that this rushing mighty wind would come upon this church with an irresistible force, which would carry everything before it—the force of truth, but of more than truth—the force of God driving His truth home upon the heart and conscience of men! I would that you and I could breathe this wind and receive its invigorating influence, that we might be made champions of God and of His truth. O that it would drive away our mists of doubt and clouds of error! Come, sacred wind, England needs You—the whole earth requires You! The foul gases which brood in this deadly calm would fly if Your divine lightning enlightened the world, and set the moral atmosphere in commotion. Come, Holy Spirit,

come, we can do nothing without You! If we have Your wind, we spread our sails, and speed onward towards glory!

Then the Spirit came as fire. A fire-shower accompanied the rushing mighty wind. What a blessing is this to the church! The church needs fire to quicken her ministers, to give zeal and energy to all her members. Having this fire, she burns her way to success! The world meets her with the fire of firewood, but she confronts the world with the fire of kindling spirits, and of souls aglow with the love of Jesus Christ. She trusts not to the wit, and eloquence, and wisdom of her preachers, but to the divine fire which clothes them with energy! She knows that men are irresistible when they are filled with hallowed enthusiasm sent from God. She trusts therefore in this, and her cry is, "Come, Holy Fire, abide upon our pastors and teachers! Rest upon every one of us!" This fire is a blessing Christ did not bring us in person, but which He now gives through His Spirit to the Church.

Then there came from the fire-shower a descent of tongues. This, too, is the privilege of the Church. When the Lord gave the apostles different tongues, He did, as it were, give them the keys of the various kingdoms. "Go," He says, "Judea is not My only dominion, go and unlock the gates of every empire, here are the keys, you can speak every language." Dear friends, though we can no longer speak with every man in his own tongue, yet we have the keys of the whole world swinging at our belt if we have the Spirit of God with us. You have the keys of human hearts if the Spirit of God speaks through you. I have this day the keys of the hearts of the multitudes here if the Holy Spirit wills to use them! There is an efficacy about the gospel, when the Spirit is with us, little dreamed of by those who call it the foolishness of men. I am persuaded that the results which have followed the gospel ministry in our lifetime are trivial and insignificant compared with what they would be if the Spirit of God were more mightily at work in our midst. There is no reason in the nature of the gospel or the power of the Spirit, why a whole congregation should not be converted under one sermon! There is no reason in God's nature why a *nation* should not be born in a day, and why, within a single 12 months, a dozen ministers preaching throughout the world might not be the means of converting every elect son and daughter of Adam to a knowledge of the truth of God! The Spirit of God is perfectly irresistible when He puts forth His full power! His power is so divinely omnipotent that the moment He goes forth the work is achieved. The great prophetic event, we see, occurred on the day of Pentecost. The success given was only the first fruits—Pentecost is not the harvest. We have been accustomed to look on Pentecost as a great and wonderful display of divine power, not at all to be equaled in modern times. Brethren, it is to be *exceeded!* I stand not upon Pentecost as upon a towering mountain, wondering at my height, but I look at Pentecost as a little rising knoll from which I am to look up to mountains far loftier! I look not to Pentecost as the shouting of our harvest home, and the bringing in of the sheaves into the garner, no, but as an offering of the first wave sheaf before the altar of God! You must expect greater things, pray for greater things, long for greater things!

Here is this England of ours, sunk in emotionless ignorance of the gospel. Weighing like a nightmare upon her bosom, we have baptismal regeneration supported by a horde of priests who either believe that dogma, or hold their benefices by subscribing to a lie! How is this incubus to be shaken off from the living bosom of England? "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." There is France cursed with infidelity, fickle, given up to pleasure—how is she to be made sober and sanctified unto God? "Not by might, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." Yonder is Germany, with her metaphysical skepticism, her half-Romanism, that is to say, Lutheranism—and her abounding Popery! How is she to arise? "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." Away there in Italy sits old Rome, the harlot of the seven hills, still reigning queen triumphant over the great part of the earth! How is she to die? Where is the sword which shall find her heart? "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." The one thing, then, which we need, is the Spirit of God! Do not say that we need money—we shall have it soon enough when the Spirit touches men's hearts. Do not say that we need buildings, churches, edifices—all these may be very well in subservience—but the main need of the Church is the Spirit, and men into whom the Spirit may be poured! If there were only one prayer which I might pray before I died, it would be this: "Lord, send to Your Church men filled with the Holy Spirit, and with fire." Give to any denomination such men, and its progress will be mighty—keep back such men, send them college gentlemen of great refinement, and profound learning, but of little fire and grace—dumb

dogs which cannot bark—and straightway that denomination will decline. Let the Spirit come and the preacher may be rustic, simple, rough, unmannered—but the Holy Spirit being upon him—none of his adversaries shall stand against him! His word shall be with power to the shaking of the gates of hell! Beloved, did I not say well when I said that the Spirit of God is of superlative importance to the Church, and that the day of Pentecost seems to tell us this?

Remember, brethren, and here is another thought which should make the Spirit very dear to you—without the Holy Spirit no good thing ever did or ever can come into any of your hearts—no sigh of repentance—no cry of faith—no glance of love—no tear of hallowed sorrow! Your heart can never palpitate with divine life except through the Spirit! You are not capable of the smallest degree of spiritual emotion, much less spiritual action, apart from the Holy Spirit! Dead you lie, living only for evil and absolutely dead for God, until the Holy Spirit comes and raises you from the grave! There is nothing good in you today, my brethren, which was not *put* there. The flowers of Christ are all exotics—“In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing.” Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one! Everything must come from Christ, and Christ gives nothing to men except through the Spirit of all grace; prize, then, the Spirit as the channel of all good which comes into you.

And further, no good thing can come out of you apart from the Spirit. Let it be in you, yet it lies dormant except God works in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure. Do you desire to preach?—how can you, unless the Holy Spirit touches your tongue? Do you desire to pray? Alas, what dull work it is unless the Spirit makes intercession for you! Do you desire to subdue sin? Would you be holy? Would you imitate your Master? Do you desire to rise to superlative heights of spirituality? Are you wanting to be made like the angels of God, full of zeal and ardor for the Master’s cause? You cannot without the Spirit—“Without Me you can do nothing.” O branch of the vine, you can have no fruit without the sap! O child of God, you have no life within you apart from the life which God gives you through His Spirit! Said I not well, then, that the Holy Spirit is superlatively precious, so that even the presence of Christ after the flesh is not to be compared to His presence for glory and for power?

IV. This brings us to the conclusion, which is a practical point. Brethren, if these things are so, let us, who are believers in Christ, view the mysterious Spirit with deep awe and reverence. Let us so reverence Him as not to grieve Him or provoke Him to anger by our sins. Let us not quench Him in one of His faintest motions in our soul; let us foster every suggestion, and be ready to obey every prompting. If the Holy Spirit is indeed so mighty, let us do nothing without Him; let us begin no project, and carry on no enterprise, and conclude no transaction without imploring His blessing. Let us pay Him the due homage of feeling our entire weakness apart from Him, and then depending alone upon Him, having this for our prayer, “Open my heart, and my whole being to Your incoming, and uphold me with Your free Spirit when I shall have received that Spirit in my inward parts.”

You who are unconverted, let me beseech you, whatever you do, never despise the Spirit of God! Remember, there is a special honor put upon Him in Scripture—“All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the sin against the Holy Spirit shall never be forgiven, neither in this world nor in that which is to come.” Remember, “If a man speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but if he speaks a word against the Holy Spirit, it shall never be forgiven him.” This is the sin which is unto death, of which even the loving John says—“I do not say that you shall pray for it.” Tremble, therefore, in His presence! Take your shoes off, for when His name is mentioned, the place where you stand is holy ground. Let the Spirit be treated with reverence.

In the next place, as a practical remark, let us, viewing the might of the Spirit, take courage today. We know, brethren, that we, as a body of people seeking to adhere closely to Scripture and to practice the ordinances, and hold the doctrines as we have received them from the Lord Himself, are but poor and despised; and when we look at the great ones of the earth, we see them on the side of the false and not of the true. Where are the kings and the nobles? Where are the princes and where are the mighty men? Are they not against the Lord of Hosts? Where is the gold? Where is the silver? Where is the architecture? Where is the wisdom? Where is the eloquence? Is it not banded against the Lord of Hosts? What? Shall we, then, be discouraged? Our fathers were not! They bore their testimony in the stocks and in prison, but they feared not for the good old cause! As John Bunyan, they learned to rot in dungeons, but they learned not to play the coward. They suffered, and they testified that they were not discouraged.

Why? Because they knew (not that truth is mighty and will prevail, for truth is not mighty and will not prevail in this world until men are different from what they are), but they knew that the Spirit of God is mighty and will prevail! Better to have a small church of poor men, and the Spirit of God with them, than to have a hierarchy of nobles, to have an army of titled princes and prelates without the Holy Spirit, for this is not merely the sinew of strength, but it is Strength itself! Where the Spirit of God is—there is liberty and power! Courage then, brethren, we have only to seek for that which God has promised to give, and we can do wonders. He will give the Holy Spirit to them who ask for Him.

Wake up, members of this church, to earnest prayer; and all believers throughout the world, cry aloud unto God to let His bare arm be seen. Wake, children of God, for you know the power of prayer! Give the Covenant angel no rest till he speaks the word, and the Spirit works mightily among the sons of men. Prayer is work adapted to each of you who are in Christ. You cannot preach, you cannot teach, but you can pray; and your private prayer, unknown by men, shall be registered in heaven; those silent but earnest cries of yours shall bring down a blessing! The other morning, when we were holding special prayer, there were some brothers present who kept saying to themselves during the prayer, scarcely loud enough to be heard, “Do Lord! Do! Grant it! Hear it!” That is a kind of praying which I love in prayer meetings! I would not care for the loud shouts of some of our Methodist brethren, though if they like, they are welcome to it, but I do like to hear friends praying with the groaning which cannot be uttered, “Lord, send the Spirit! Send the Spirit, Lord! Work! Work! Work!” During sermon time it is what numbers of churches should be doing, crying out to God in their hearts. As you walk the streets, when you see sin you should pray, “Lord, put it down by Your Spirit!” And when you mark a struggling brother, striving to do good, you should cry, “Lord, help him! Help him by Your Spirit.” I am persuaded we only need more prayer, and there is no limit to the blessing; you may evangelize England, you may evangelize Europe, you may Christianize the world, if you do but know how to pray. Prayer can get anything of God, prayer can get everything—God denies nothing to the man who knows how to ask! The Lord never shuts His storehouse till you shut your mouth! God will never stop His arm till you stop your tongue; cry aloud and spare not! Give Him no rest till He sends forth His Spirit once again to stir the waters, and to brood over this dark world, till light and life shall come! Cry day and night, O you elect of God, for He will avenge you speedily. The time of battle draws near! Rome sharpens her sword for the fight! The men of error gnash their teeth in rage! Now for the sword of the Lord and of Gideon! Now for the old might and majesty of the ancient days! Now for the shaking of the walls of Jericho, even though we have no better weapons than rams’ horns! Now for the driving out of the heathen, and for the establishment of God’s Israel in the land! Now for the coming of the Holy Spirit with such might and power that as Noah’s flood covered the mountaintops, Jehovah’s flood of glory shall cover the highest summits of sin and iniquity, and the whole world over, the Lord God Omnipotent shall reign!

You who have not the Spirit pray for Him. May He prompt you to pray this morning! Unconverted sinners, may the Spirit give you faith! Remember that the Holy Spirit tells you to trust Christ. If you honor the Holy Spirit, trust Christ. I know you must be regenerate, for the man who trusts Christ *is* regenerate. You must repent, you must be holy, but the man who trusts Christ *shall* repent, and *shall* be made holy; the germs of repentance and holiness are in him already. Trust Christ, sinner! It is the Holy Spirit’s mandate to you this morning. May He compel you to trust Him, and He shall have the glory, world without end. Amen.

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