Keeping the Vision

Read the 20th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, beginning at verse 7. Humanity is a failure everywhere. But when humanity is filled with divine power, there is no such thing as failure; and we know that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a failure.

There are two sides to this Baptism: the first is, that you possess the Spirit; the second is that the Spirit possesses you. This is my message at this time--being possessed by the Baptizer, and not merely possessing the Baptizer. There is no limit to the possibilities of such a life, because it has God behind it, in the midst of it, and through it. I see people from time to time very slack, cold, and indifferent; but after they get filled with the Holy Spirit they become ablaze for God. I believe that God's ministers are to be flames of fire; nothing less than flames; nothing less than mighty instruments with burning messages, with a heart full of love, with such a depth of consecration that God has taken full charge of the body and it exists only that it may manifest the glory of God. Surely, this is the ideal and the purpose of this great plan of salvation for man--that we might be filed with all the fulness of God, and become ministers of life, God working mightily in us and through us to manifest His grace--the saving power of humanity.

Now let us turn to this wonderful Word of God. I want you to see the demonstration of this power in this man Paul--this man who was “born out of due time:” this Paul, who was plucked as a brand from the burning; this Paul whom God chose to be an apostle to the Gentiles. See him first as a persecutor, mad to destroy those who were bringing glad tidings to the people. See how madly he rushed those people to prison, striving to make them blaspheme that holy name. Then see this same man changed by the power of God and the Gospel of Christ; see him filled with the Holy Ghost, becoming a builder for God and a revealer of the Son of God, so that he could say, “It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me.” Gal. 2:20.

In the 9th chapter of Acts, we read that he was called

to a special ministry. The Lord said to Ananias, “I will show him what great things he must suffer for my name's sake.” I don't want you to think that this means suffering from diseases; for it means suffering persecution, suffering from slander, from strife, from bitterness, from revilings and from many other evil things; but none of these things will hurt you; rather, they will kindle the fire of the holy ambition, because the scripture says, “Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matt. 5:10. To be persecuted for Christ's sake is to be joined up with a blessed, blessed people; but, better still, it means to be united with our Lord Jesus in the closest of fellowship, the fellowship of His suffering. There is a day coming when we will rejoice greatly that we have been privileged to suffer for His name's sake.

Beloved, God wants witnesses, witnesses to the truth, witnesses to the full truth, witnesses to the fulness of redemption--deliverance from sin and deliverance from disease--by the eternal power working in them, as they are filled with life through the Spirit. God wants us to believe that we may be ministers of that kind--of glorious things wrought in us by the Holy Spirit.

See in verse 7, how Paul was lost in his zeal for his ministry, so that he “continued his speech until midnight.” Then something happened that threatened to break up the meeting--a young man, becoming sleepy, fell out of the window. That was enough to break up any ordinary meeting. But this man, filled with the Spirit of God, was equal even to such an emergency even on the moment. He went down, picked up the young man, brought life back into him by the Spirit of life that was in him, then returned to the upper room and continued the meeting until break of day.

In Switzerland the people said to me, “How long can you preach to us?” I said to them, “When the Holy Ghost is upon us, we can preach forever!” When I was in San Francisco, driving down the main street one

day, we came across a crowd in the street. The driver stopped and I jumped out of the car, and right across from where the tumult was, I found a boy lying on the ground apparently in the grip of death. I got down and asked, “What is amiss?” He replied in a whisper, “tramp.” I put my hand underneath his back and said, “In the name of Jesus, come out.” And the boy jumped up and ran away, not even stopping to say “Thank you.”

So you will find out that, with the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, you will be in a position to act when you have no time to think. The power and working of the Holy Spirit is of divine origin. It is the supernatural, God thrilling and moving one with the authority and power of almightiness, and it brings things to pass that could not come to pass in any other way. I had some things of this character happen on the ship as I was crossing the ocean. I want ever to be in Paul's position--that at any time, even at midnight, in the face of anything, even death itself, God may be able to manifest His power and do what He wants to do through me. This is what it means to be possessed by the Spirit of God. My heart is thrilled with the possibility of coming into the place where Paul was. Let us read verse 19, that we may get our mind perfectly fortified with this blessed truth that God has for us.

“Serving the Lord with all humility of mind.” None of us is going to be able to be a minister of this new covenant of promise in the unction and power of the Spirit without humility. It seems to me that the way to get up is to get down. It is clear to me that in the measure that the dying of the Lord is in me, the life of the Lord will abound in me. And to me, truly, a Baptism of the Holy Spirit is not the goal, but it is an inflow to reach the highest level, the holiest position that it is possible for human nature to reach by Divine power. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is given to reveal and to make real Him in whom dwells “all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” Col. 2:9. So I see that to be baptized in the Holy Spirit means to be baptized into death, into life, into power, into fellowship with the Trinity, where the old life ceases to be, and the life

of God possesses us forever.

No man can live after seeing God; and God wants us all to see Him in all His glorious, infinite sufficiency, so that we shall joyfully cease to be--that He may become our life. Thus it was that Paul could say, “It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me.” I believe that God wants to make real to us all this ideal of humility where we so recognize human helplessness and human insufficiency that we shall rest no more on human plans and human devices and human energy, but continually look to God for His thought, for His voice, for His power, for His all-sufficiency in all things.

Now here is another word for us. Let us read it. It is found in verse 22. “Now, behold, I go bound in spirit.” Is there a possibility of the human coming into oneness with the divine will? Let me give you two other versions of Scripture. Jesus was a man of flesh and blood like ourselves; though He was the incarnation of the authority and power and majesty of heaven, yet He bore about in His body our flesh, our human weakness, being tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. Oh, He was so lovely! Such a perfect Saviour! Oh, that I could shout “Jesus!” so that all the world would hear. There is salvation, life, power, and deliverance through that name; but, beloved, I read in Mark 1:12, that that body was driven by the Spirit. In the fourth chapter of Luke, it says “led” by the Spirit. And now here is Paul “bound” in the spirit.

Oh, what condescension that God should lay hold of humanity and so possess it with His holiness, with His righteousness, with his truth, with His faith, that one can say: “I am bound in spirit; I have no choice; my only choice is for God; my only desire, my only ambition is the will of God; I am bound with God.” Is this possible, beloved? If you look into Galatians, first chapter, you will see how wonderfully Paul rose into this state of bliss. If you look in the third chapter of the Ephesians, you will see that he recognized himself as less than the least of all saints. Then, if you'll look

into the 26th chapter of Acts, you will find him saying, “I have never lost the vision, King Agrippa, I have never lost it.” Then if you will look again in Galatians, you will see that, in order to keep the vision, he conferred not with flesh and blood; God laid hold of him, God bound him, God preserved him. I ought to say, however, that it is a wonderful position to be in--to be preserved by Almightiness--and we ought to see to it that we leave ourselves to God. The consequences will be all right. “Whosoever shall seek to save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake the same shall save it.”

Now, beloved, I am out for men. It is my business to be out for men. It is my business to make everybody hungry, dissatisfied. It is my business to make people either glad or mad. I have a message from heaven that will not leave people as I find them. Something must happen after they are filled with the Holy Spirit. A man filled with the Holy Spirit is no longer an ordinary man. A man can be swept by the power of God in the first stage of the revelation of Christ so that from that moment he will be an extraordinary man. But to be filled with the Holy Spirit he has to become a free body for God to dwell in, and to use, and to manifest Himself through. So I appeal to you, you people who have received the Holy Spirit, I appeal to you to let God have His way at whatever cost; I appeal to you to keep moving on with God into an ever increasing realization of His infinite purpose in Christ Jesus for His redeemed ones until you are filled unto all the fulness of God. To remain three days in the same place would indicate that you have lost the vision. The child of God must catch the vision anew every day. Every day the child of God must be moved more and more by the Holy Ghost. The child of God must come into line with the power of heaven so that he knows that God has his hand upon him.

It is the same Jesus, the very same Jesus. He went about doing good. “God anointed Him with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him.” Beloved, is not that the ministry

God would have us see we are heir to? The mission of the Holy Ghost is to give us a revelation of Jesus and to make the Word of God life unto us as it was when spoken by the Son--as new, as fresh, as effective as if the Lord Himself were speaking. The Bride loves to hear the Bridegroom's voice! Here it is, the blessed Word of God, the whole Word, not part of it, no, no, no! We believe in the whole of it. We really have such an effectiveness worked in us by the Word of life, that day by day we are finding out that the Word itself giveth life; the Spirit of the Lord, breathing through, revealing by the Word, giving it afresh to us, makes the whole Word alive today. Amen. So I have within my hands, within my heart, within my mind, this blessed reservoir of promises that is able to do so many marvelous things. Some of you most likely have been suffering because you have a limited revelation of Jesus, of the fullness of life there is in Him.

In Oakland, Calif., we had a meeting in a large theatre. God wrought in filling the place till we had to have overflow meetings. There was a rising tide of people getting saved in the meeting by rising voluntarily up and down in the place, and getting saved. And then we had a riding tide of people who needed help in their bodies, rising in faith and being healed. One of these latter was an old man 95 years of age. He had been suffering for three years, till he got to the place where for three weeks he had been taking liquids. He was in a terrible state. I got him to stand while I prayed for him; and he came back, and with radiant face, told us that new life had come into his body. He said, “I am 95 years old. When I came into the meeting, I was full of pain from cancer of the stomach. I have been so healed that I have been eating perfectly, and have no pain.” Many of the people were healed in a similar way.

(After the telling of the above incident in the meeting in Wellington, New Zealand, where this address was given, a lady arose who had rheumatism in the left leg. After being prayed for, she ran the full length of the hall several times, then testified to partial healing. A young man with pain in the head was healed instantly.

Another man with pain in the shoulder was healed instantly also.)

In the second chapter of Acts, you will see that when the Holy Ghost came there was such a manifestation of the power of God that it wrought conviction as the Word was spoken in the Holy Ghost. In the third chapter we read of the lame man healed at the Beautiful Gate through the power of the Spirit, as Peter and John went into the Temple. And in the fourth chapter, we read of such a wonderful manifestation of miraculous power through the Spirit that five thousand men besides women and children became believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. God gives manifestation of His Divine power, beloved, to prove that He is with us. Will you not, right now, open your heart to this wonderful God, and let Him come into your life and make of you all that His infinite love has moved Him to provide in Christ Jesus, and that His infinite power, through the Holy Ghost, has made possible to be wrought in sinful man.

Seek this vision from God, and keep it ever before you. Pray the prayer that the apostle Paul prayed for the Ephesian believers, as recorded in Ephesians 1:17, 18, 19, “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe.”