**VOLUME 1; CHAPTER 18 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE LACK OF THE SPIRIT by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?*

*Acts 19:2*

"DID YE RECEIVE THE HOLY GHOST WHEN YE BELIEVED?" NOT, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" There is no warrant for the introduction of that word "since" into the Authorized Version. The tense is the same in both the verbs. "The Holy Ghost received ye when ye believed?" The only difference is that the one is a question and the other an affirmation. Received ye? Ye believed. This is a distinction rendered necessary by a difference. The introduction of the word "since" makes the Apostle's question mean, "Subsequently to believing, have ye received the Holy Ghost?" The inquiry which he raised really was, "Coincidentally with believing, did ye receive the Holy Ghost?" The Apostle's question was not whether these people had received a second blessing. It was rather an inquiry into the nature of the first blessing. An examination of the context will, I think, throw light upon the meaning of this question and enable us to make that personal and present application of it which is important to us.

Apollos was a Jew, that is, a proselyte, for he was an Alexandrian by race. He was "a learned man," and he was "mighty in the Scriptures." This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord, which does not mean that he was perfectly familiar with all the facts concerning the mission of Jesus. He had been, as the margin more accurately has it, instructed by word of mouth in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit he spake and taught carefully the things concerning Jesus, not all of them, for he did not know all the things concerning Jesus, "knowing only the baptism of John." In all likelihood, upon some occasion Apollos had listened to the voice of the forerunner, had heard him as he foretold the coming of Another. He knew the One of Whom John spoke through what John had said, and he knew no more. He knew that One was to come after John, whose fan was to be in His hand, Who was to thoroughly purge His floor: One so Kingly that John said of Him that He was not worthy to stoop down and unloose the latchet of His shoe, One Who would baptize men with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

Knowing these things and being fervent in spirit, Apollos taught carefully what he knew. Listening to him were Priscilla and Aquila, who knew a great deal more than the preacher. They recognized his power and sincerity, but they knew his lack. I never know whether to admire Aquila and Priscilla or Apollos more for what follows. They heard him, and "took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more accurately." I admire them because they did not write letters to the newspapers about him, but took him unto themselves. I admire him because he was willing to listen to two persons who were members of his congregation. After this instruction he appears to have passed on to Achaia. There his message was changed. He knew far more than when he had begun to preach in Ephesus. "He helped them much that had believed through grace, for he powerfully confuted the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ."

He had persuaded men during the early days of his preaching to take a certain position - the one he himself had taken. He had told them about John and his message, about the One Who was to come after, the One Who was to come with His fan in His hand to purge His floor, to gather the wheat into a garner and to burn the chaff with unquenchable fire. Some of them had believed and had been baptized with John's baptism, but nothing more. No preacher ever lifts his hearers above the level of his own spiritual attainment.

When Paul came into contact with these men he saw that something was lacking. They had a great deal, but not everything. They had come a certain distance, but had halted. Paul discovered that they lacked the power of the Holy Spirit. There were certain inimitable evidences of the Spirit's presence in human lives which were lacking in these people, and he said to them suddenly, and I think with a note of surprise in his voice, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" They said, "We did not so much as hear whether the Holy Ghost was given," which does not mean that they did not know of the existence of the Holy Ghost, because John had preached the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the fact that One was coming Who would baptize them with the Spirit. It does mean, as our rendering gives us to understand, that they had not heard whether the Holy Spirit was given. John's teaching had declared that it should be given, but they had not heard whether the promise had been fulfilled. Then Paul asked another question, "Into what then were ye baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism." "Then," said Paul, in effect, "if you were baptized into John's baptism, you have not been obedient to John's message. John told you that you must repent, but he also told you that you were to believe on the One who was to come." Then most evidently Paul told them He had come, told them the story of His coming, of His work, and led them further on. They were then baptized in the name of Jesus. It was an act of faith, and following that, Paul laid his hands on them, symbolically, not sacramentally, and in that moment, as they were baptized because they believed in the name of Jesus, while Paul's fatherly hands lay still upon them, the Holy Spirit fell upon them.

Now look and listen. They spake with tongues, they prophesied, and from that day forward no apostle could ask them, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" The signs have come. The evidences are present. The something lacking is lacking no more. The inner life bubbles up into joy, ecstatic speech, tongues. The inner life pours itself out in testimony, prophecy. They had received the Holy Ghost because they had believed on Jesus in all the fullness of the apostolic message concerning Him. They had not until that moment received the Holy Ghost, because they had believed on Jesus only within the narrow limits of John's message concerning Him.

Now, I think with the light of that context upon the text, we see how this may be a very pertinent and absolutely important question today.

I am speaking to an audience the vast majority of which believes in Jesus. There may be some few here who have lost their faith in Him, and have lost their faith in revealed religion. With all sincere and honest respect for them, they are outside the scope of my present message. Were I to go from pew to pew and speak individually to man, woman, and little child, asking the same question, "Do you believe in Jesus?" the answer would be naturally, honestly, truthfully, "Yes." Therefore I bring you the Apostle's question, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" Is your belief of that nature which has resulted in the actual reception in your own life of the Holy Spirit of God?

If in the economy of God some of these apostles of the Early Church were called upon to face congregations such as we have to face, I think they would pause in astonishment in the first ten minutes, and would say, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" There are hundreds and thousands of people who in some measure believe in Jesus Christ who have never received the Spirit, who have never been baptized with the Spirit, who have never been born again, for the terms are synonymous. Ethic without enthusiasm, principle without passion, desire without dynamic, negation of the wrong things without position in the soil of the new life - this is a perilous state in which to live. It is a perilous state because to continue in that state is to become in the one tremendous word of the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, "hardened."

The ethic merely accepted as true becomes traditional bondage. The principle obeyed with no passion of fire burning through it becomes heartlessness. Desire for the higher life and the broadening of the outlook long unfulfilled become cynicism. The negation becomes chaos. This is what is happening everywhere. You believe on Jesus, yes, and you believe on Jesus very reverently; you have never taken His name in vain. So far from that, you have always attended what we call the means of grace, you have sung the hymns of the sanctuary, you have attentively listened to the message delivered by the servants of God. You have come so far as to believe the ideals of Jesus, you accept them; but there is no passion, no fire, no force, no light upon the mountains, no song in the heart.

Faultily faultless, icily regular,

Splendidly null.

Dead while you live. Our churches are crowded with such people, who have never received the Holy Ghost, who, if you begin to speak to them, will say, "We are not sure about this doctrine of the Holy Ghost. We do not even know whether the Holy Ghost is!"

May I press the examination of this passage of Scripture a little further for our own profit. What was the fault of the attitude of these people? They had halted. John had pointed them on to Jesus. They had not fully obeyed. I do not know that it would be fair for me to criticize them or to attempt to say they were blameworthy in this matter. It may have been that they had never heard the final facts about Jesus. Perchance Apollos had never heard them. It may have been that in the darkness which resulted from the crucifixion all hope in Jesus had been eclipsed. They may have heard of the death of Jesus, and may have heard rumours of His resurrection. They may have said, "We are not certain that this is the One. John said there was One to come, but this may not be the One." Be all that as it may, this is certain, they had halted after repentance. They had never taken the second step which John had commanded - to believe on Him Who was to come. When Paul came he preached Jesus to them in all the fullness of the apostolic message. They went beyond the messenger John to One of whom he spoke, and thus passed into the realm of life. They no longer waited for the operation of the fan and the operation of the fire, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost, they gave themselves over thereto, and immediately they did so, they felt the burning of the fire, the sweeping wind of the fan, the touch of a new life. The horizon was flung back, the windows were opened, the thrill of life for which they had waited came to them when they abandoned them-selves to Jesus Christ.

What is the one thing lacking in all such as believe in His ethic, in His ideal, who come so far as recognition of the beauty and glory of His purpose? In order to come into touch with His life, what is the one thing needful? Just the step further. Hand the life over to Him by an act of faith. In the case of these people it was an act which expressed itself in baptism. I do not think for a moment that the method of expression matters. I do think that the act of faith which drives a man to a method of expression is the important thing. I do not believe that these men received the Holy Ghost because they received water baptism. Nobody believes that the immersion in water was the medium of the baptism of the Spirit. By that baptism into the name of Jesus they gave expression to their faith in Christ. Answering that faith expressed in that act, the Spirit came upon them.

That is what you need. You have been for years on the confines of Emmanuel's land. You are familiar with all the songs, but you cannot sing them and feel the rapture of them. You are familiar with all the phrasing of Christianity, but it has never become the phrasing which beats your heart into infinite music. You need that faith which abandons itself absolutely and wholly, not to an ideal you would like to realize, but to a Person who will realize in you every ideal after which your heart is seeking. In order to receive the Holy Ghost we have to add to our conviction, confidence; to our repentance, faith; to our hope, appropriation, and all these things in relation to Jesus Christ. The living Christ has come. The Spirit has been poured out. Westminster Chapel, London, tonight is as full in every part of the Holy Spirit of God as was the upper room on the day of Pentecost. The mistake you have been making for years is that you have been waiting for Him to come in nights of prayer and lonely vigil, in speculative inquiry; waiting while you have been attending conventions and reading books about the Holy Ghost. The Spirit has come. He is here. Every man, woman, and little child in this house is surrounded by the beneficent Spirit of God, waiting to come in, waiting to teach you the deeper music of life, its vision and glory. "How is it that I do not feel the thrill and do not see the light?" you ask. Because you have never believed in Jesus Christ. Convinced of the perfection of His ideal, put confidence in Him, and rank yourself by His side and under His banner. Repenting of sin, changing your mind about it, trust Him to give you victory in every department of life. Hoping for a better day, appropriate the day that has come. Wishing that you could be delivered, be delivered now by trusting Jesus Christ. Just where you sit, hoping, wishing, wondering, cast yourself upon Jesus Christ and say, "Here I am, now, just as I am." The Spirit of God will bring the living Christ into your own inner experience. That will end your infidelity, your scepticism, your wonder. You will pass into the realm of life, and all the signs following will be granted to you.

What were the signs following? "They spake with tongues and prophesied." I am not going to inflict upon you any elaborate discussion as to that "spake with tongues." It was a repetition of the Pentecostal experience, and yet not a repetition, but to them the very Pentecostal experience. Just what Peter, James and John and the rest received at Pentecost these men received then. Just as Peter, James and John, waiting for the Spirit when Christ's work was done, received it, and immediately spake with tongues and prophesied, so these men who had been waiting, when they received the Holy Spirit, did the same thing - they spake with tongues. My own conviction - and here is a speculation with which you need not waste time - is that the miracle of Pentecost was not a miracle of talking in different languages, but of hearing in different languages. I believe these were the same tongues of which you read in Corinthians, notwithstanding other opinions. I believe the gift of tongues was the gift of ecstatic utterance, in praise, in prayer, in gladness. Somebody said, "Hallelujah," a little while ago, and you did not like it. I am afraid it was a sign that you have not received the Holy Ghost. I do not mean to say that if you have received the Holy Ghost you will say, "Hallelujah," but you will be in sympathy with the man who is bound to say it. The deadly dullness of half our services is proof of the fact that we lack the Spirit of God. If that fire is within me I burn, and, some-how or other, either in the volume of congregational song or some other way, it must flame forth. "They spake with tongues." They could not help it. Don't you, dear intellectual soul of this twentieth century, be cynical with the man who breaks out into tongues. You know the story; it is told of half a dozen different painters. I do not know of which one it is really true. I will fix it on Turner. He was showing one of his pictures to a friend, who said, "Oh, but that is not real. I have never seen colors like these." Turner replied, "No, but don't you wish you could?" Do you, in your cold intellectualism, say you never feel inclined to shout? Don't you wish you could? There is pathos in my question. The dead, hard, cold profession of the present day is tragic, pathetic. We need again to hear the outburst of song, of praise. When these men received the Holy Ghost they spake with tongues. There were only twelve of them most likely, all speaking the same language. The rigidity of repentance had merged into the renewal of remission. All the hardness of waiting and longing had passed into the gladness of receiving. That is the difference between believing in Jesus intellectually and believing in Him so that the answer is the answer of the Spirit creating ecstasy that speaks with tongues and conviction that utters itself in prophecy.

That was not the only sign. Read the chapter further, and you will find that these people created an atmosphere of apostolic testimony; they became a propagative centre from which the Word of God sounded forth through all Asia. You will find also that they became the objects of imitation. You will find, finally, that their presence in Ephesus meant the undermining of idolatry, and presently we see the flaming fires at which men are burning the things of their witchcraft. Even until this hour the same thing is true. Let there fall upon us tonight the great constraint to go a little further, a little beyond the repentance which is change of mind about sin, a little beyond the long, lonely waiting for something that comes not, a little beyond into personal definite submission to Christ, what then? First tongues and then prophecy, and then an atmosphere in which the preacher can preach in the coming months so that men shall be saved, and then a propagative centre from which the Word of God shall sound through all the neighbourhood, then spurious imitation and the force that lights fires which destroy the witchery and wizardry which are cursing our age.

In the name of God do not let us talk of the Day of Pentecost as though it were a day that came and went nineteen hundred years ago. This is the day of Pentecost. The Spirit of God is here. If I am not singing, living, prophesying, it is because I am like the twelve men at Ephesus - I have come so far and have halted. Man, dare to go further. Add to your present position the final thing of belief in Jesus Christ.

If we have received the Spirit, there is yet responsibility. I can express it in one word, Yield. Take that step of faith in Jesus Christ tonight, and the Spirit will come upon you, and immediately you will feel the burning of the fire, the rising of the song, the driving of the power. In the name of God do not quench that fire. "Quench not the Spirit." Do not stifle that song. "Grieve not the Spirit." In the name of God do not resist that power. Resist not the Spirit. Hear the ancient words again, hear them upon the fringe of a new winter's work, while doors of opportunity are opening before you. "Quench not the Spirit." "Grieve not the Spirit." "Resist not the Spirit."

What answer do you give to the Apostle's question, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" If you say honestly, in this hour of clear vision, "No," then receive Him now. You say, "How can I receive Him?" Not by opening your heart to the Spirit, but by opening your heart to Jesus Christ. Not by believing that Christ is the perfect example, but by enlisting under His banner and putting your whole life at His disposal. By trusting Him for yesterday, to-day, tomorrow, and the infinite forever, with your whole life, physical, mental, and spiritual. If your answer to the Apostle's question be "Yes," then in God's name remember your peril, for we are all in peril. If we have received the Holy Ghost and the tongues have begun to speak and prophecy has begun, what is our peril?

That was the foundation of the Ephesian Church. It was a wonderful church, so great a church that Paul wrote the last flaming glory of his letters to it. But that is not all about the church. There is another letter to the Church of Ephesus, which the great Lord, believing in whom, they had received the Spirit, sent to them through John from Patmos. In that letter He says such tragic things as these, "I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love." As God is my witness, I can hardly take up my Bible and read these words without my heart being ready to break. It is the sigh of Christ over the lost love of people who had received the Spirit, and who once had tongues and prophesied. Is Christ sighing over your lost first love? Some of you business men years ago, before you were so well off, felt the fervour and passion of the Spirit's power. Have you lost it? Are you just a wee bit impatient with me tonight because I have taken this line? You would not have been ten years ago. You have lost your first love.

What did Christ say to the church that had lost its first love? "Repent and do the first works." I love that. It is His new opportunity for backsliding souls. "Go back. Begin where you began before. Repent; change your mind once more. Get back to the place where you stood when you left me. Do over again the thing you did at Ephesus when the sky became glorious and the song burst forth." Will you do it tonight? Many of you, lost lovers of Jesus, are you coming to Him tonight?

Hear me again patiently. Do not think this harsh, unkind. I deliver it as the message that is on my heart. I am not half as anxious about you as I am about the multitudes who are outside. I want you in order to reach them. I would far rather see this place in ashes than see it the tomb of a dead, lifeless mob that admires Jesus and feels nothing of His life pulsating in them. We stand upon the threshold of tremendous opportunities. Are we ready for them? The question we are to ask our own souls is, "Did we receive the Holy Ghost when we believed?" If not, here and now, let us yield ourselves to Christ, and we shall receive. If we have received and have lost the thrill, and the saffron of morning has become the gray of eventide, let us go back. Though the way be rough, even though it means the cross, even if shame attend our going, let us go back to the first works, and out of the valley of humiliation shall rise Emmanuel's land of light and love and service for every one of us.