

POWER FROM ON HIGH

by, CHARLES G. FINNEY

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To the honor of God alone I will tell a little of my experience in this matter. I was powerfully converted on the morning of the 10th of October. In the evening of the same day and on the morning of the following day, I received overwhelming baptisms of the Holy Ghost that went through me, as it seemed to me, body and soul.

I immediately found myself endued with such power from on high, that a few words dropped here and there to individuals were the means of their immediate conversion.

My words seemed to fasten like barbed arrows in the souls of men. They cut like a sword. They broke the heart like a hammer. Multitudes can attest to this. Oftentimes a word dropped without my remembering it, would fasten conviction, and often result in almost immediate conversion.

Self-Judgment

Sometimes I would find myself in a great measure empty of this power. I would go out and visit and find that I made no saving impression. I would exhort and pray with the same result. I would then set apart a day for private fasting and prayer, fearing that this power had departed from me, and would inquire anxiously after the reason of this apparent emptiness.

After humbling myself and crying out for help the power would return upon me with all its freshness. This has been the experience of my life.

The Spirit's Sword

I could fill a volume with the history of my own experience and observations with respect to this power from on high. It is a fact of consciousness and observation, but a great mystery. I have said that sometimes a look has in it the power of God. I have often witnessed this. Let the following fact illustrate it:

I once preached for the first time in a manufacturing village. The next morning I went into a manufacturing establishment to view its operations. As I passed into the weaving department, I beheld a great company of young women, some of whom, I observed, were looking at me and then at each other, in a manner that indicated a trifling spirit, and that they knew me. I, however, knew none of them.

As I approached nearer to those who recognized me, they seemed to increase their manifestation of lightness of mind. Their levity made a peculiar impression upon me; I felt it to my very heart. I stopped short and looked at them. I knew not how, as my whole mind was absorbed with the sense of their guilt and danger.

As I settled my countenance upon them, I observed that one of them became very much agitated. A thread broke; she attempted to mend it but her hand trembled in such a manner that she could not do it. I immediately observed that the sensation was spreading and

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had become universal among that class of triflers. I looked steadily at them, until one after another gave up and paid no more attention to their looms.

They fell on their knees and the influence spread throughout the whole room. I had not spoken a word, and the noise of the looms would have prevented my being heard if I had. In a few minutes all work was abandoned, and tears and lamentations filled the room.

At this moment the owner of the factory, who was himself an unconverted man, came in accompanied, I believe, by the superintendent, who was a professed Christian. When the owner saw the state of things he said to the superintendent, "Stop the mill." What he saw seemed to pierce him to the heart. "It is more important," he hurriedly remarked, "that these souls should be saved than this mill should run."

As soon as the noise of the machinery had ceased, the owner inquired: "What shall we do? We must have a place to meet where we shall receive instructions." The superintendent replied: "The mule room will do." The mules were run up out of the way and all the hands were notified to assemble in that room.

We had a marvelous meeting. I prayed with them, and gave them such instructions as at that time they could bear. The Word was with power. Many expressed hope that day, and within a few days, as I was informed, nearly every hand in the great establishment, together with the owner, had hope in Christ.

Spirit's Conviction

This power is a great marvel. I have many times seen people unable to endure the Word of God. The most simple and ordinary statements would cut men off from their seats like a sword, would take away their bodily strength, and render them almost as helpless as dead men.

Several times it has been true in my experience that I could not raise my voice, or say anything in prayer or exhortation, except in the mildest manner, without entirely overcoming those who were present. This was not because I was preaching terror to the people; but the sweetest sounds of the Gospel would overcome them.

This power seems sometimes to pervade the atmosphere of one who is highly charged with it. Many times, great numbers of persons in a community will be clothed with this power when the very atmosphere of the whole place seems to be charged with the life of God. Strangers coming into it and passing through the place, will be instantly smitten with conviction of sin, and in many instances converted to Christ.

When Christians humble themselves and consecrate their all afresh to Christ, and seek for this power, they will often receive such a baptism that they will be instrumental in converting more souls in one day than in all their lifetime before.

While Christians remain humble enough to retain this power, the work of conversions will go on till whole communities and regions of country are converted to Christ.