



Be still.

*“Crush our hearts
between these two
millstones—a sense
of sin, and a sense
of Divine grace.”*

“THE EXCEEDING RICHES
OF HIS GRACE.”
EPHESIANS 2:7

MANTLED CHRISTIANS

from “Christians and Christians” by F. S. Webster

No one could doubt it. Each time they saw him it was plainer and plainer; the spirit of Elijah had fallen upon Elisha. There was the old mantle, plain enough; and, beyond all question, there was the same old power, only increased. How it cheered the doubters, and how it silenced the scoffers.

The account of Elijah’s ascension into heaven had been widely circulated.

Many were incredulous, and laughed at the whole story. “Your prophet has gone, has he? Your great champion of Mount Carmel, on whom you used to lean, has disappeared, and you say he has been taken up into heaven. A likely story, indeed! And pray, if Elijah is gone, where is Elijah’s God?”

Others believed the account, but were sorely troubled with doubts and difficulties. Elijah is gone—yes, he is safe; but who is to take care of us? He was our fortress and pillar; he saved us from the wrath of Jezebel. The very thought of his manly daring and courage cheered and strengthened us. Can we really look up to the God Elijah spoke about? Where shall we find Elijah’s God?

Thus many scoffed, many doubted; but **one man waxed strong in faith.**

Elisha kept close to Elijah right unto the end. From Gilgal (not the Gilgal near Jordan, but probably some place near Mount Carmel, from where they “went down”) to Bethel, from Bethel to Jericho, from Jericho to Jordan, and right on into

the desert, till like a whirlwind the chariot of fire came down from heaven, Elijah was carried away, and Elisha was left alone. His heart is beating with mingled joy and sorrow—sorrow that his master is taken from him, but joy, triumphant joy, that the condition upon which Elijah’s promise had rested has been fulfilled, and the double portion of his master’s spirit he may now claim as his own.

His own garments he rends in two, and grasps Elijah’s mantle—striking symbol of forsaking his own spirit and strength, and

Have you grasped the mantle?

claiming the promised blessing. He comes back to Jordan and looks at the waters flowing swiftly past him. Shall he venture to cross as Elijah had done, or shall he seek for some easier ford? No indeed; he holds the mantle in his hand; he remembers the promised power. “Where,” he cries, striking the water with the mantle, “Where is the Lord God of Elijah?” The God he thus called upon in faith came to his aid, the waters divide, Elisha steps across on dry land. Thus was it always. He had taken the mantle not

merely to wear it, that others might look on and admire it; it was not some precious relic to be displayed and talked about; the mantle was for use; it brought out the power of Elisha’s God; it overcame the difficulties that confronted him. And so the people believed, and the fearful and unbelieving were answered. True! Elijah was gone, but Elijah’s God remained as powerful as ever, and working still greater and more convincing wonders through Elisha.

When the Lord Jesus was carried up into heaven, did not His mantle descend back again to earth? Had it not been promised, “Greater things than these shall ye do, because I go to the Father”? Was it not abundantly fulfilled on the day of Pentecost? Is it not still His will that Christians should receive the double portion of His Spirit? Does not the command, “Be filled with the Spirit” still stand on the page of Scripture, and apply to every servant of God?

If so, have you grasped the mantle?

Surely it is in using Elijah’s mantle that we can best show that the Lord God of Elijah reigns. “Is not the possession of this Divine Power the only true Apostolic Succession? However highly we value the rich heritage of Creed and Liturgy which we have received from Primitive Christianity, it is only the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that can give life to the well-defined doctrine or true fervour to the beautifully worded prayer. No so-called Apostolic Succession can secure the presence of Apostolic Power.”

Is it for all, or for only a favoured few? In Elijah's time it was only the few who received the fulness of the Spirit's power. "Thou hast asked a hard thing," he replied, when Elisha made his request. But now it is for all. "It shall come to pass afterward," saith the Lord, "that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." Joel's prophecy has been fulfilled, and the mantle is for all who will fall in with the conditions and claim it.

What are the conditions? Well, Elisha had to follow Elijah from place to place, keeping close to him, and leaving all others behind. Surely it is a picture of the union with Christ and separation from the world. These are the conditions.

This following Christ, where will it lead us? Not only through Gilgal, where we roll off our burden of sin, and Bethel, where an open heaven brings very near to us the presence of our God, but also Jericho, the city of the curse, the Calvary, where we are one with Christ in rejection, and Jordan, the river of death, where we are buried with Him in baptism into death. Not until our union with Christ has been thus tested, and we have followed Him through Gethsemane and Calvary, can we expect to receive the mantle of power.

Union and separation—yes, there must be separation as well as union.

Do you know what an insulator is? It is not enough to be in contact with the electric fluid by grasping the brass knob of an electric machine, you must also stand upon a glass stool, and thus be insulated or cut off from the earth. Only thus can you be so filled with electricity as to give shocks to those who touch you. Many Christians seem to be in union with God, but yet are never able to give shocks to other people. No one ever draws a spark of fire from them. It is because they are not separate or cut off from the world.

The mantle is for use, not ornament. Are not some Christians seeking the fullness of the Spirit just as an experience to be enjoyed and talked about? The mighty Holy Ghost power is only given to be used. Are you prepared to use the mantle if God give it to you? Will you face your responsibilities as Christians, and witness for God before a dying, Christless world?

There were two special commands left by our blessed Saviour just before His ascension. The one was "Go ye," the other, "Tarry (wait) ye." We must not forget either. We need the Tarrying to give power to our Going. We need the Going to give purpose to our Waiting. Let us accept the responsibility of "going" as witnesses for Christ wherever He sends us, even to the uttermost parts. Then let us Tarry before God, to be emptied of our own sufficiency and clothed with the mantle of Divine power. Do both. "Tarry and Go." Grasp the mantle and use it. ■

Conditions of Power

from "The Law of Liberty in the Spiritual Life" by Evan Hopkins

"Power belongeth unto God."—Ps. 62:11

"Christ the power of God."—1 Cor. 1:24

"The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him."—2 Chron. 16:9

"And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."—2 Cor. 12:9

"That ye may know ... what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe."—Eph. 1:18, 19

"Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power."—Col. 1:11

The essential condition of spiritual power is union with Christ. The power of which we speak is power for practical godliness, personal holiness, and effective service. This power is not from ourselves.

It is not something lying dormant within us, something that has been covered up, and only needs to be liberated, set free.

It is Divine power. Originally God put power into the hands of man, but he lost it at the fall. Now God has put power in Christ. He does not give it to each one separately, but He has bestowed it on Christ; He has laid it up in His own Son. There it is eternally safe, and there it is for all the members of His body. But while it is there—and there for us—we cannot have it apart from vital union with Him.

It is not a gift that He bestows, just as you can communicate flame to some combustible material, as, for instance, when you light one candle by another. In that case, the newly lighted candle, whatever the source from which it was lighted, has an independent flame of its own, and burns of itself. Spiritual power is not communicated to the soul after this fashion. It is power by virtue of union.

You go into some large factory; you pass through various departments; you see in each machinery at work, you see power accomplishing marvellous results: and you ask, What sets all these things in motion? Where is the source of all this activity?

Then you are taken to the engine-house. There you see the centre, the source of all the power that is put forth throughout the whole factory. The machinery in each department works, not by its own independent force, either generated in itself or originally derived from some other source, but by a force received moment by

moment, and continuously, from the central engine.

The essential condition for the communication of the power from the engine to the machinery is union. Break the connection, and the power ceases. So that power which we must have if we are to live overcoming lives must be Divine power, God's power; not something that we have derived from God, and is stored up in ourselves, but that which we are receiving—which comes to us as a ceaseless stream of energy from the central source of all spiritual life, the Lord Jesus Christ. There must be vital union with Him who is the Power of God.

But then we know that all believers are united to Christ, and "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." We know also that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." A man may hold the doctrine of Christ, and yet may not be united to Him; but he cannot have the Spirit of Christ without also having union with Him. The spirit is the essence of union. This is true of all believers. This union is not a matter of attainment in holiness, it is the starting point of all life, it is the beginning of all holiness. Life comes by receiving the living One. Identified with Christ in His atoning death, we are united to Christ in His risen life. "There is one body and there is one Spirit." And the body bears the same name as the Head—"the Christ." "So also is the Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12). Christ is the Head of angels; but He is the Head of the body, of which every believer is a member, in a far higher sense than He is the Head of angels. They form part of the company of heaven, but believers are members of that body which is the bride of Christ. This union is no figure of speech, no mere dream; it is a reality, literally though spiritually true.

Now however a difficulty arises. The lack of power which we deplore is in those who are thus united to Christ: how are we to understand this acknowledged deficiency in those who are in vital union with the Source of all power?

Let us in the first place bear in mind that of no believer can it be said absolutely that he has no power. Power, in some measure, every child of God possesses; if there is life there is power. It may be life in its very lowest forms, but if life exists at all there will be some power, however feeble.

But what we now speak of is overcoming power. Not that which simply struggles and offers some resistance to sin, but that which rises triumphantly over every wave of temptation, which is able effectually to withstand every assault of the evil one and courageously to give

its witness to the grace, the sufficiency and the faithfulness of God.

We can understand how there may be union, and yet a lack of power in that sense.

Look at a man whose arm is withered. There is union between the hand and the body; but for all practical purposes there is no power for action or service. Here then we have a figure of the condition of things between many a believer and the Source of all power—union and yet no strength.

This presses the point still nearer home. What are the hindrances that stand in the way of the manifestation of power in those who are in union with Christ? We are all necessarily subject to limitations—limitations that are inseparable from our moral and physical constitution, hindrances that exist in the fact that we are finite creatures.

God's power is infinite, but our capacity is limited. No amount of growth or spiritual progress can so enlarge our capacity that it shall ever be equal to God's own fullness. There are therefore limitations; but these are not the hindrances to the power of which we speak, these are not the obstacles that have to be removed. While our capacity can never become infinite, it is capable of endless increase—inconceivable expansion. Take, for instance, such passages as these, "All things are possible to him that believeth"; "That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." The vessel I bring to be filled may be empty, or it may be partly occupied with something else. Worse than all, I may be keeping my hand over its mouth, and thus preventing the water from flowing in. In that case, it is not a question of the sufficiency of supply, but of the condition of reception. Well, the provision is infinite, and the channel that connects the vessel with the fountain is established—there is union. And yet there may be a hindrance to the inflowing stream of power. What then is the hindrance?

The great hindrance—that which lies at the root of every other—is unbelief. We limit God by our unbelief. The avenues of our being which bring us in contact with Christ may become contracted, and the vessel into which the power is to flow may have been reduced to a very small capacity, all through the chilling influences of unbelief. If we are to be filled with the power of God, our faith must grow. Whatever increases our faith will increase our capacity, will open the avenues of our being to God, and the power will flow in.

But instead of looking at power in the abstract, instead of regarding it as a quality we can have from God and apart from Him, it will help us to understand the conditions of its manifestation if we think of it as **inseparable from the Lord Himself.** "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of him whose heart is perfect toward Him" (2 Chron. 16:9). Instead of recognising the truth that I am weak and God is to show Himself strong in me, I may be expecting to see myself made strong. I may be looking for an experience of power in myself, rather than for a manifestation of Divine power in me. He will show Himself strong in behalf of him whose heart is perfect towards Him.

The condition of power then is to have a

perfect heart towards God. What are we to understand by a perfect heart?

Looking at the word in the original we observe first that it means a heart *at peace with God.*

The great work of peace is accepted. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee" (Isa. 26:3). A heart perfect towards God is a heart that rests on Christ's atoning work. The words "perfect peace," or "peace, peace," include the thought of recompense, thus bringing out the idea of atonement, or the work of peace. The word "perfect" in 2 Chronicles 26:9 is also rendered "peaceable" (Gen. 34:21 *shalem*). For when the heart rests on the work of peace, Divine, all sufficient, and completed once for all, it is not only to be at peace *with* God, but to have the peace *of* God; it may know, not only the peace of justification, but the peace of sanctification. A heart perfect towards God then is a heart against which no charge can be laid, which is justified from all things, and also in which there is no longer any controversy with God. The Spirit dwells in such a one, not as a Reprover, but as a Comforter.

Another thought is suggested by the word perfect in that passage in Chronicles. A "perfect" heart is a heart *wholly yielded* to God. We read, "Thou shalt build the altar of the Lord thy God of *whole* stones" (Deut. 27:6. See also Joshua 8:31). Here we have the same word rendered "whole." A perfect heart is a *whole* heart. Wholeness is one of the primary meanings of holiness. Holiness of heart is wholeness of heart. "My son, give Me thine heart" (Prov. 23:26). A perfect heart is a heart that has responded to that appeal. It gives itself up without reserve. It lays itself wholly on the altar of consecration, and that altar is Christ. The altar consecrates the gift. For "every devoted thing is most holy unto the Lord" (Lev. 27:28).

But the same word has another rendering. Concerning Solomon's temple it is written, "And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone *made ready* before it was brought thither" (1 Kings 6:7). The word perfect is here rendered "made ready." The stones were all prepared and made fit for the builder, they were ready for his use. A perfect heart is therefore a heart in a state of preparedness. It is "meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim. 2:21). It is "a heart at leisure from itself." Not absorbed in its own cares or spiritual difficulties, but being at rest and consecrated to God, it is free to devote itself to His service. As soon as the opportunity presents itself it is ready to embrace it. No time is lost in getting ready. Like an instrument always in tune, such a one is at once prepared to be used by the Master whenever He pleases.

How many spend their time in the work of preparing their hearts, as if their own sanctification were the great end of their calling!

The carpenter sharpens his tools for the work he has to do; but the sharpening of the tools is not the end, but only the means to the end he has in view. So, getting our hearts right with God, is only the means towards the accomplishment of the great purposes for which we have been redeemed.

When the artisan who is engaged in some elaborate piece of workmanship requiring the

highest skill, the most delicate art, and the best of instruments, lays his hand on a tool and then finds that it has lost its edge, he at once lays it down, and takes up another that is ready for use. He puts forth his power through those instruments that are perfect or "made ready"; only such is he able to use in his work.

How many of God's children is He obliged to prepare, by severe discipline it may be, before they are meet for His use! How much of pride and self-will and carnal energy have to be taken out of us, before we are really fit to be used in His service! It is not from lack of power—power belongs unto God, and there is no lack of power in Him—but from a want of being right towards Him, a want of this perfection of heart of which the word of God so often speaks, that we know so little of the manifestation of power in ourselves. He is ready and waiting to "show Himself strong in the behalf of him whose heart is perfect toward Him."

Once more we read concerning David's mighty men that "they came with perfect heart to make David king over all Israel" (1 Chron. 12:38). There was thorough integrity of heart in the matter. There were no mixed motives, no lack of sincerity. It is a true heart, sincere as the apostle desired in behalf of the Philippians, "that ye may be sincere," that is, "judged in the sunlight and found genuine." It is thorough in its aim and intention—"perfect towards God." It describes an attitude rather than an attainment.

Such a heart does not shrink from Divine searching. It willingly yields itself to the penetrating, purifying and consuming power of God's holy fire. Such a heart is loyal towards the Lord; its desire is that Christ should be king over the whole being.

Let this condition of soul be brought about, and there will be no lack of power. God Himself will make perfect his strength in our weakness.

How often we have said, "Thine is the power," but how little have we entered into the deep meaning of those words! Too often we have had our minds occupied with the thought, "Oh that mine were the power!" But to have His strength we must have Himself. It is not that He will show that I am strong. I am ever to be learning my own weakness—that I am weakness itself. But it is that His strength may overshadow me *as a tent*. Such is the meaning of the words, "That the power of Christ might rest upon me" (2 Cor. 12:9).

When God is about to manifest His power through His children, it is thus that He leads them. He brings them into this condition of heart—a condition in which there is no longer any controversy with Him, in which every part of their being is voluntarily yielded to Him, in which the heart is entirely at His disposal and maintained in an attitude of loyalty towards Him. There is then no hindrance in the instrument to the manifestation of His power. The channel is then open, and free from all obstruction to the flowing forth of His fullness. There will then be a manifestation of Divine power in all directions.

Conquering power. The very first enemy that must be conquered, if we would lead triumphant lives, is Self. The only power that can conquer Self is the power of God. We get the benefit of

that power by submitting to it—getting under it. To know what it is to be led forth in triumph by Christ you must first become His captive. He is always going forth as the Conqueror, and there are no conquerors but those who are included in His train, who are conquering because conquered by Christ. Have you noticed the reason which the Centurion gave why his words commanded obedience? He did not say, “Because I am a man *having* authority”—but “because I am a man *under* authority.” And the greatness of his faith consisted in this, that he recognised Christ’s relationship to the God of heaven. “I *also* am a man under authority.” Christ’s word was power because He was under Divine authority. The Centurion recognised Christ’s relationship to Divine Omnipotence. He thought that just as all the power of Rome was behind him, and he had but to speak and it was done, so all the power of heaven was behind the Man Christ Jesus, and He had but to speak the word only, and his servant would be healed.

Here is the secret of reigning over sin. We must be under Divine control; we must know what it is fully to submit to it. “Humble yourselves therefore *under the mighty hand of God.*”

Sustaining power. Some there are of God’s children who seem to be always struggling to keep themselves up. You see a man in the water. In terror of sinking he begins to struggle, and soon he finds that his struggling is vain, as, in spite of all his efforts, he sinks. But there is power in that very water to keep him afloat. Faith, it is true, is needed, and certain conditions must be fulfilled. One is, that he must cease from struggling. Let him cast himself on the water, and cease from trying to keep himself from sinking; let him trust the water to bear him up and instead of sinking he floats!

So it is in finding the power that keeps us spiritually from falling. We must be ready and willing to abandon ourselves to His almighty keeping. **The responsibility of keeping us from falling is His; the responsibility of trusting Him to keep us is ours.**

Protecting power. We need this on every hand. Not only over us and under us, but on all sides—encircling us: “who are being guarded in the power of God.” Christ, who is the power of God, is the fortress in which the trusting soul is

garrisoned. Let the enemy find you thus entrenched, and he will be met by a power which is not yours but God’s; he cannot touch you. “He that was begotten of God (i.e. Christ) keepeth him, and the evil one toucheth him not” (John 5:18, 19).

Transforming power. The power of God is to fill us. When the tabernacle was finished, then God’s presence filled it. “So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Exod. 40:33-35). When we who are the temples of the living God lose the glory we lose the power. God transforms us by filling us. “That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God” is the blessing the apostle sought on behalf of the Ephesian converts.

Lastly, *overcoming power.* Power, that is, for service, for aggressive work, and for suffering. It is the remark of an able preacher that “the Church has in it a power that is ever adequate to the conquest of the world” (Maclaren). This is true, because it is God Himself who is in the Church. “God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them” (2 Cor. 6:16).

When the disciples said to our Lord, after their failure in the matter of the lunatic child, “Why could not we cast him out?” what was our Lord’s answer? “Because of your unbelief.” Consecration, or an attitude of thoroughness towards God, and faith, are closely related.

We are addressing ourselves to those who are believers. It is not therefore a question of the impartation of the gift of faith; it is a question of the exercise of the faith they already possess. How is faith to be increased and strengthened?

There are three things which faith needs—freedom, food, activity.

Faith needs freedom. It is thoroughness that liberates faith. When we are brought to give ourselves wholly to the Lord, then it is that our faith is set free. If our eye is not single our faith will be crippled, hampered. “How can ye believe which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” The want of the single eye was that which made faith impossible.

“I feel I cannot trust Him,” says one. Why not? Is He not trustworthy? “Oh, yes; but I feel something holding me back.” Is it anything like that to which David referred when he said, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me”? (Ps. 66:18). Is there a suspicion that something is withheld? Is there any doubtful thing that you are afraid to bring into the light in order to have God’s judgment about it? It is not by trying to believe that faith gets strengthened, but by removing the fetters that keep it bound.

Again, faith needs food. The work of God is the food of faith. In order to trust, faith must have something to trust to, a Person to trust in. The Scriptures are the warrant of faith. If faith is not always occupied with this infallible warrant, it will grow weak and feeble. Faith may be suffering from starvation. Our thoughts may turn upon ourselves; we may be occupied with our own activity, with our own act of believing, rather than with the Word of God. But it is only as faith grasps the truth of the Scripture, or the facts that the Scripture reveals, that it gets strengthened.

Once more, faith needs exercise. All faith is given to be used. We do not know whether we have it at all until we are using it. This comes out in obedience; for what is obedience but faith in action? Faith must carry out into practice that which it believes.

It is so with the body. Unless we take exercise as well as food, we become indolent and slothful. So with the soul there is such a thing as spiritual indigestion. Our practical obedience and courage of faith may be a long way behind our knowledge. Let us be stepping out continually on the light revealed to us; that is, putting into practice, translating into action the truth we are receiving as food into our hearts.

It is as our faith grows that our strength increases. No greater blessing can possibly be desired than the growth of our faith, because this involves the well-being of every other part of our spiritual life.

The apostle said on behalf of the Thessalonians, “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your *faith groweth exceedingly*” (2 Thess. 1:3).

“According to your faith be it unto you.”

THE KEYS OF DEATH

by ANDREW A. BONAR

Today I rejoiced in the idea of it being God alone that I had to do with in going into eternity. He seemed so well known and sure. His heart is open. His grace has made all known to us.

I see and believe that I should deal with Jesus just as did the twelve disciples, and should pray for my fellow-labourers, as if I were one of those praying for the seventy gone forth to the villages and towns. And then I may think of dying as just returning to tell Jesus all things that I have done and taught, and

may expect to find Him as gracious, overlooking all defects, and rejoicing in spirit over even the little done in His name.

The man who sees Christ in life is sure to see Him in the valley of the shadow of death. Christ has the keys of death, and it is He Who opens the gates and admits us into that invisible world. Then His will be the first face we see there—a known face. Dying is just more of Christ.

We should be living so that we could be ready to go any day. If you were to go to call upon some

Christian friend, and the servant were to tell you at the door, “Oh, he’s gone!” would you feel you almost envy him? Are you living so that the only difference really that death would make would be to make you say, “Well, my fellowship with the Lord will be closer, but I’ve had fellowship with Him all day”? When Elijah was told he was to be taken up, he went on doing his ordinary work, visiting the schools of the prophets. He did not spend the day in prayer or in any special preparation, as we call it. What we need for death is just what we need every day—the Saviour Himself with us.