

**THE**

# **Spirit of Christ**



**IN THE HOUSE OF GOD**

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## Preface

Back in August of 1981, the author presented a work called Learning To Rule Is Not Easy. It was designed to make suggestions that would allow sincere Christians to become aware of Bible standards for a special or a peculiar people. Such a 'peculiar people' the Bible calls overcomers in several places. This thinking was presented under two general heads:

1. The spiritual requirements of God upon an individual before he can belong to this special group, and...
2. The description of a corporate people, a group, comprising such a people. That work insisted that more is required than simple regeneration, usually called "salvation" and extends to the whole life of the believer.

It may seem a little presumptuous on my part that I should again attempt to present a work that enlarges on this theme, since there were so many hindrances to the publishing of that first work. That work is available and it would be of profit to you to have it to gain a better appreciation of this subject. But the present work does not depend on that for its sense.

The Laodicean condition among so many churches at the present challenges me to deal with this theme again. If one has received mercy of the Lord to be born again this is cause for true rejoicing. We thank God for every one who believes to be regenerated. At the same time we to life is more than an entering of the gate.

Our burden is that men learn to walk willingly in the way of life so they may inherit the kingdom in the age to come. More important than that, so that God may get the glory which He is due from each one who trusts Him. How many shall miss this and be saved "yet so as by fire" (1 Corinthians 3:15), failing to "look to (themselves), that (they) lose not those things which (they) have wrought," and thus do not "receive a full reward" (2 John 8)!

## **Introduction**

Why should a redeemed man, freed from sin's bondage, be so

ungrateful as to claim his life yet as his own? It would seem that he would be moved to seek the ways of the Lord so he could walk in them. Does he not want to do God's will? The debt we owe, absolutely beyond our paying, should make us eternally grateful. Can we not say, together with a great man of God,

*"I am a debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise, so, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel..."?*

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:14-17, quoting Habakkuk 2:4 at the end).*

Paul's expression, "The just shall live by faith," is recorded in the book of Habakkuk as, "The just shall live by his faith."

This suggests several things:

The just man is a righteous man, an indication that he already has faith. Because righteousness is imputed to a man because of his faith we know that to the man who truly believes God counts right-eousness (Genesis 15:6 ; Hosea 4:5).

Because God is faithful, if any man believes Him He has no reason to delay that grace which faith appropriates. God counts righteousness to a man as soon as he believes.

He lives by faith. It is not merely that "he comes to life" because of his faith. "He lives" is indefinite and suggests progress. Do not think only that he has eternal life by believing, though he does. The meaning is that there should be a deliberation in one's living by faith.

Suppose I say that I live by the standards of a noble family, does this mean that I am alive because I live by these standards? Do you not understand me to say that my conduct is deliberate according to the standards of the house of which I

am a part? You would not say that those standards gave me life. You would know that I have chosen to walk day by day by the standards of which I speak.

Living by faith has this same sense. Faith has become the motivating power in my life. No step is taken in one's own strength or wisdom. Should he take such a step he soon realizes this is error and repents of it, seeking forgiveness for this sin and seeking the light of God in which to walk.

This is truly living. Each new day is "unto life." There is no fear of perishing, but there is a consciousness of life and a yearning to develop that life and mature in it.

The believer walking by faith is not seeking to avoid losing his life, but he is seeking to enlarge the sphere of the life which stems from his faith walk. He truly lives. His is not a life filled with boredom, drudgery, problems and pains. It is not merely a life filled with earthly joys, which are temporary. It is a life of hope, peace, and expectation -- all because of his faith in God. Unless you know salvation in this way you will not appreciate the spirit of Christ.

### **A. Terms Take On New Meaning**

Salvation, such as is experienced by the man living by faith, ceases to mean only an experience which occurred some time previous, glorious as that experience might have seemed. The joy accompanying that original experience of deliverance was overwhelming and is a delight to recall. Do we not still retain that salvation? Is not the experience, in our memory, still as delightful as at the first? And is not the peace of that moment still something that envelopes the soul and comforts the heart? Is it not a fact that such salvation is a continuing experience? Is it not evident, if you have been very long redeemed, that God still comes to your rescue when you meet difficulties, temptations, or tests of any kind? Does He not forgive you daily when you ask Him? Does He not supply strength to resist temptation before you yield, if you remember and ask? Are you not inclined to look to Him and pray for a present help in time of trouble?



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Then who dares to say that salvation is something which happened only in the past? I suggest that our labeling salvation as being in three tenses (past, present, and future) is not wise. It breaks up into parts something which we can handle with our thoughts, but it tends to nullify, or at least minimize, a continuing experience. Salvation is God's deliverance. It began for me at a point in time, but from there it should be a continuing work of God in my life.

In the Scriptures the word salvation particularly applies to deliverance from this present evil world. Other words better describe our relationship to God: *redemption, forgiveness, regeneration, justification*. Some of these words continue in my experience. I am forgiven each time I come confessing my sins if I am under the blood.

Revival is a form or expression of the quickening which the Spirit wrought on me at the beginning but which I need and seek when I am spiritually down. I had peace at the beginning, and if sin comes into my life I lose that peace, or it fades in significance. Anytime I repent and confess my sins, though, the peace comes back. Is this not a present tense form of God's continuing salvation?

Grace appears in a new light just as soon as we realize that God is gracious. We know He saved us (redeemed us, regenerated us) when we did not deserve it. He favored us because of His love though we did not deserve it. Now that we are justified do we feel that we are more worthy, deserving, stronger or more able? Not at all. We may ask God to make us strong, or to strengthen us, but we must remember that these things can only be true in Him. We must be walking in Him in order to be strong. It is not our strength but His. Grace is needed every hour of every day. God is there with His favor any time we need Him, even when we do not realize that we need Him.

Justified as we were when we first trusted Him, there still come those days when God's promises and assurances loom large before us and our hearts reach out to Him anew to claim them. When we do this we are "justified" in so doing.

Justification, then, is a continuing work of God's grace as our

faith appropriates His Truths. This was the case with Abraham in that proof passage so often cited as evidence that men are justified by faith (Genesis 15:6). This is not the day that Abraham was redeemed or regenerated. That had occurred years before while he was yet in the land of the Chaldeans (Hebrews 11:8). Since he left that land by faith in God we must believe that he had already been justified. But it was not said that it was his faith by which he was justified until the incident related in Genesis 15:6. There he was lamenting his not having a son in the flesh to be his own heir, though God had promised it and he remembered that promise.

So God explained that Eliezer should not be his heir, but he and Sarah should have a son. God told him that the offspring from this son should be as the stars of heaven in number. Abraham believed these promises and "it was counted to him for righteousness." How sweet it is to believe God's words when all past experiences and disappointments have suggested to our minds that these promises may not be true.

But Abraham believed and God counted it to him for righteousness. In this believing he was justified. Much later, when the promised son (Isaac) had been born and his very soul was wrapped up in the lad, the boy being probably a teenager, God told him to take the lad, the lad he loved, and go into the land of Moriah and offer him in sacrifice to God. What a blow! He did not hesitate long, though.

Before day-light the next morning he told Sarah he was going over into the land of Moriah with the lad and offer sacrifice to God. Nothing was said as to what the sacrifice should be. Even when the accompanying servants were told to wait with the pack animal while he and Isaac should go up the mountain to, offer to God nothing was said, only that he and the lad would return to them. What faith! How could the lad return if he offered him in sacrifice? But he believed he would return.

As Isaac carried the wood for the fire and this aging man of God went up the mountain the lad asked his father, "Where is the sacrifice? We have the wood and the fire, but no lamb." Abraham's answer, "God will provide himself a sacrifice." Isaac's faith is also evident in that he did not question this

wisdom. Nor is it suggested that he resisted when his father bound him and placed him on the wood. Not till the knife was raised for the slaughter did the ram appear, caught by its horns in the bushes nearby.

The state of Abraham's heart during this procedure is revealed to us in Hebrews 11:19. He offered his son, his only begotten son, "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence he also received him in a figure." James explains to us (James 2:21-23) that in this act Abraham was justified by works. The proof text James used is Genesis 15:6; for he says that passage was fulfilled. The fulfilling of Scripture does not mean that it is no longer true. It may be confirmed to us over and over again in the workings of God. Abraham acted out of faith — he worked by faith and God honored his faith and kept His promise by providing himself a sacrifice. He had expected God would raise Isaac from the dead. At least He knew He could, and he knew of no other way for God to keep His promise to make his seed like the stars unless Isaac were raised.

Figuratively speaking, God raised Isaac from the dead by providing the ram. After all Isaac was as good as dead, for Abraham obeyed God to offer him. Many expressions which men have limited to that initial experience we had at our regeneration apply to the whole of our living by faith. Such misapplication is very misleading.

## B. Some Terms In This Thesis

No communication is effective unless we know the meaning of the terms employed by the communicator. If you think only of being born again when I say "salvation," my language will seem confusing or contradictory.

### 1. "Salvation"

The term 'salvation' has already been dealt with in this Introduction.

### 2. "Church of Christ"

'Church of Christ' is another term not heard the same way by everyone. Protestantism has given to this expression a sense

which is not found in the Bible. In his book, *COMMUNICATION FOR THE CHURCH*, Raymond W. McLaughlin, on the second page of the first chapter has this footnote:

“The term ‘church’ herein used refers to the universal church. The term ‘local church’ refers to a local congregation of believers.”

In this he creates a problem for us who read the Scriptures allowing them to determine their own meanings, for there the sense of the word is one. There is no “universal church.” If it is not in the Bible why do men speak of it and use the expression? I learned the answer to this while reading *THE THEOCRATIC KINGDOM* by George N. H. Peters. He says that Luther faced a dilemma. Luther felt he could no longer stay in and serve Romanism because of its corruption, so he determined to come out. But this gave him serious pause, as he understood the sacraments to be in the church (baptism, holy orders, marriage, etc.). If he should thus depart from the Church of Rome he would have no authority for baptizing. He could no longer be a priest of “the church.” There he had learned of the “Holy Catholic (universal) Church.” He knew it as a visible body. What should he do? His conclusion at last: the church must be invisible, made up of all those who truly have faith. Thus was the doctrine of the so-called universal church “invented” by Luther.

Many readers will have no problem with the expression “universal church,” but since I have accustomed myself to follow the meanings given in the Scriptures themselves I am not able to accept this expression. I am aware that the word “katholikos” (Greek for general or universal) is found in the title (such as in the book of James) of a few edited versions of the Greek New Testament. However, it is not in the text of the Bible. Strictly, it means “according to the whole,” and a church never is according to the whole sphere of Christendom.

This last word is too large or inclusive for what most writers want to express when they say “church.” They like to think that it includes only those who are born again, but all of them. For what McLaughlin meant to say I feel that the word “Christian” would have been a better choice. Even this, how-

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ever, strains the word and removes it from its initial sense found in the Bible.’<sup>1</sup>

“Church” is always local. It cannot be anything else. The very nature of the word requires it. It is an assembly. Coming from two words meaning “called out” from the masses and gathered together in a body, it is necessarily visible and local.

When a Greek city-state had matters of interest to its citizens, a crier went through the town announcing a town meeting. Thus the citizens were called out from their homes or work places and into an assembly. This use of the word is seen in Acts 19:32, 39, wherein both occurrences have been rendered “assembly.”

The word “churches” in vs. 37 is actually “temples.” The local sense is easy to see in this chapter and no other meaning is allowed. This is not a church of Christ, but it explains for us the meaning of the word itself.

An assembly which Christ has called together, out of the world, willing hearers of His voice, is a church. “Hearing His voice” is an essential factor. Coming together to Him is essential. Where He dwells! He has asked that these declare their position. In baptism they say that they are dead to the world and alive (resurrected) unto God.

This is a first step in submission to God. If in everything believers will submit to Him then He will dwell in their midst and own them as His people. It is His dwelling in their midst which: makes them His church (Ephesians 2:19-22). Christ is the one to determine whether a people has the kind of hearts He requires and will submit and follow Him. What men do because they like to do it, or because they think it is their duty, is not what makes them a church. It is His presence and that alone.

### 3. “House of God”

The ‘house of God’ is another appropriate term (1 Timothy 3:15). It describes “the habitation of God through the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:21, 22), a building where He can make His home. Note, though, that we are not speaking of a church

house or meeting place. The church is not the building where people assemble. Calling such a church is a mere accommodation of terms. The church is made up of men in the flesh in whom Christ dwells so He can manifest Himself to other men in all the fullness of His glory. Such a people give Him an opportunity to continue to reveal the Father to men as He did when in the body born of the virgin.

#### 4. "The body of Christ"

Here, again, men press language out of context and inject meanings which are improper. What is a body? Is it a group of parts, helter-skelter, even heterogeneous, maybe even scattered far from each other? This seems to be what many think when they speak of the body of Christ. Paul used the human body to illustrate a church. He even names some of the parts: nose, ear, eyes, mouth. Those members dis-united are not a body. They have to be assembled, "fitly framed together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth" (Ephesians 4:16).

We are speaking of the human body. In the very same way the body of Christ is made up of living members capable of acting Independently, having a mind of their own. There can be a separating of the members. If all of the saved make up a supposed body there is no way one could be separated without his losing his salvation.

Protestants may teach such but God's people who believe the Bible cannot believe this. It can and must assemble to be a church, but it is a church even in those moments when it is not assembled. It would not be a church if it never did assemble, but it does not cease to be a church when the members go to individual dwelling places.

Still there is a joining (Acts 3:13 ; Acts 9:26), a compactness, a relatedness, a solidarity, which makes them a local congregation when they do assemble. One or more members may live far away and not be able to assemble often. It would be better if he could meet with another congregation that was closer to him; one in which was a dwelling place for the Christ. That would be the thing for him to do. A church, if it is the

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Lord's, is always such as may assemble at a definite address. It may change its meeting location, but it is always visible. It may be photographed.

Of what use would a body be to the Christ if it did not manifest visibly the fullness of God according to His filling (Ephesians 1:22, 23)? It must be visible. Only so can it show the world the glory of their Lord. An invisible body would be useless. An invisible Christ would have been useless too. Someone thinks he has a perfect rejoinder to this position, so he asks, "How many bodies does Christ have?"

So far as a given congregation is concerned He only has one body. So they wonder how there could be many local bodies. They overlook the principle of language that allows a word to be used generically. For example, in what sense are we to understand the following statements?

"The horse and plow was the dependence of early farmers." Which horse? Only one horse for a farmer, or for all farmers?

"The jury is masterpiece of American jurisprudence." Which jury? Only one jury?

"The husband is the head of the wife." Is there only one composite husband embracing all of the wives as a composite wife?

Let us not be silly. Everyone understands this principle of language of which I am speaking, that is, when we choose to do so.

A church's showing God's glory is absolutely and completely dependent upon His dwelling in their midst as their Head. When it speaks of Christ as the Head of the body" the meaning is that every member recognizes His authority and submits to it.

Hands, using crutches, may do the work of feet. But why should they, or why would they? Only because of the direction of the head. If one foot, or any member of the body suffer, all the members suffer with it, caring, and helping to bear the burden not borne by the suffering member.

This is because of the authority of the head. So with the members of the body of Christ. But the members of an imagined "universal" body do not bear such suffering for the other members. They do not know about it, and if they are Missionary Baptists they may not even care about it.

#### 5. "The Spirit of Christ"

This phrase accords with normal usage in our language, but it may be difficult for some. It is not found very many times in the Bible.

As a man, Jesus had a spirit just as all men do, since we all are "*spirit, soul and body*" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). But we are not speaking of that element of man's makeup. We are using the word "spirit" in the sense that it is so often found both in the Scriptures and in ordinary speech -- temper or disposition of mind.

A spirit is present because of some empowering or some thinking which adds it to the situation, hence, an inclination, impulse or tendency of a specified kind; a special attitude or frame of mind; the feeling, quality, or disposition characterizing something (or someone).

For example, a spirit of fun, a spirit of industry, a spirit of meekness (1 Corinthians 4:21), a broken spirit (Psalm 51:17), spirit of the world (1 Corinthians 2:12).

>> Note: In 1 Corinthians 2:12, the phrase "spirit which is of God" is not referring to the Holy Spirit, though it is accomplished or brought to pass by the Holy Spirit. There are many other examples).

#### C. What Is The Spirit Of Christ?

"Spirit of Christ" Is a phrase not often found in the New Testament. In fact, in this form, it is found only once that I know of, and that in connection with the resurrection of the body (Romans 8:9). There it describes those who shall qualify to be resurrected. The word in vs. 11 is the same in sense, describing those who belong to Christ. To many expositors this has become an expression very convenient for those who establish that every believer (the universal church idea again) has the



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indwelling Holy Spirit. But that is not the sense here. The spirit of Christ is an expression that describes a true Christian who is obedient to God. His disposition is what we call "Christ-like."

When Jesus came forth from the dead it was by the quickening of the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18) and in that same act He Himself became "a quickening spirit" (1 Corinthians 15:45). In the Old Testament God's active engagement in the performing of His purpose is said to have been by His Spirit.

Spirit performing is God acting. In the New Testament, under the terms of the New Covenant by which God now administers His righteous will upon earth, the Christ identifies with the Holy Spirit.

In the Old Testament the Spirit is identified with the Father, though the word "Father" is seldom used. Spirit God there is a manner of speaking of God as Spirit. Today Spirit identifies with the Lord Jesus Christ into Whose hands the Father has committed all of His works. So now Christ is "the Lord, the Spirit" (the spirit of the Lord). He, Christ, the Lord, the Spirit, are all terms describing the same Person (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18 ; 1 Corinthians 15:45).

This distinction is necessary if we are to appreciate the distinction between God's manner of administering His will in this age as against the Old Testament dispensation. This contrast is described at length in 2 Corinthians 3:6-18. In the previous age God's righteousness was administered by the law (Romans 8:3, 4 et al.) but now it is ministered by the Spirit, that is, by Christ, in men of faith (Romans 3:21-23).

Israel pursued the law of righteousness but did not attain to the law of righteousness (Romans 9:31). Why? "Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law" (Romans 9:31, 32). They did not know about the righteousness of God to be had by faith, so they failed to submit to it and tried to establish their own righteousness (Romans 10:3).

We do not say that they did not trust the Lord for salvation, for many did, but most men, including those who did trust him to save them, were not familiar with the matter of attaining righteousness through faith.

For men who have never been born again it is tragic, because it prevents their being born again. It is still tragic for those who have been born again if they think to please God through works of the law, or works of the flesh. These two expressions (works of the law and works of the flesh) describe any work not done with faith in God as the only worthwhile work (John 6:29). Works of effort, works done to get the job done, works done in human will are all works devoid of faith and do not please God. The law is not of faith (Galatians 3:12).

There are many believers, born again people, who still do not know about God's righteousness and how He ministers that righteousness in the lives of men today. Many of them think that it was imputed to them when they first trusted Christ (and if they truly trusted Him, it was), but they do not know that God means for it to be evident in the walk of that believer. It must be wrought in His life. It must show to others. It must characterize the man so that "the spirit of righteousness" is a description of his life. Such is "*the spirit of Christ.*"

We are living in the ministration of the Spirit. This means that the Holy Spirit administers God's righteous will today. But He certainly is not doing it fully all over the earth. Christians are to pray for the kingdom to come and God's will to be done as it is in heaven. When this condition comes to pass righteousness shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, and all men shall see it and know it. But today it is limited. Most men say it is limited to the saved. I suggest that it is limited much, much more than that.

Not nearly all those who believe in Jesus as Savior allow, or even know, that Christ would administer His own righteousness in their lives. They feel it is up to them, by their own strength of resolution, to produce righteous fruits in their lives. They decide from a gathering of study, of tradition, of circumstances, just what is righteousness and attempt with human purpose and wisdom to produce it in their lives.

The truth of the matter is that only in the Lord's church is it possible to fully bear the fruits of the Spirit in one's life. Not many local congregations witness even a semblance of such fruitfulness much of the time.

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All of God's enemies are to be put under His feet. This has not happened yet (Hebrews 2:8). All power and all authority have been given to Christ in heaven and in earth and under the earth. But not yet have all things been put under Him. All things are to be brought together and reconciled to God, in one, in Christ. But it is not true yet. Not even in every believer is God's will accepted. So many believers do not even know what that will includes, so they do not submit to Him to perform it. It will be, yes, but not yet.

In one place (though we ought to expect it) provision is made for this to be realized NOW: "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things TO THE CHURCH, which is His body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:22,23). God gave Christ to the church to be her sovereign Head. This is what the verse says. This is already true.

In due time, in the kingdom that is to come, this will become true of "all things," but it is supposed to be true now of the church. If every member believed it in his heart and could accept it and submit to God as he ought, then "the spirit of Christ" would prevail in that body today.

The glory of God was evident in the law and is symbolized in the shining face of Moses when he returned from receiving the law on the mountain. As high and holy and glorious as the law was, as good as it was, the glory of Christ's ministry by the Spirit is far more glorious (2 Corinthians 3:9-11).

That glory (in symbol) faded from Moses' face. In fact, he veiled his face so that the children of Israel would not see the glory fade (vs. 13). He did not want Israel to know that the glory of the law was a fading glory and therefore unable to make men righteous (Galatians 3:21).

But the full significance of that veil is properly explained by the blindness of their hearts (minds), (2 Corinthians 3:14, 15). So we are living in the church today in a ministration of righteousness (2 Corinthians 3:9), a ministration of the Spirit (vs. 8), and not a ministration of death (vs. 7) nor of condemnation (vs. 9), as the law is rightly described. This means that

the Spirit of life from God ministers life and righteousness and holiness in His church today.

Are we still missing the thought of Christ's ministering His righteousness, His life, His holiness, in the lives of church members today? What is it to have these things ministered to the church? It means that these attributes of God which were manifest in Christ Jesus on earth, so that He was the express image of the Father's person, are ministered to the church today. But it is not done in any church, or in any individual, apart from faith and a willingness to have it so.

There are certain requisite conditions, both for the church body as a whole, and for each individual member. Just as God caused the light to shine in the original creation when there was "darkness upon the face of the deep," so He has now shined in our hearts "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

This glory consists of the "fullness of God." That fullness includes all that there is of God — all of His attributes.

All these dwelt in the Christ "bodily," (Colossians 2:9) and it pleased the Father that it should be so (Colossians 1:19). Thus was He the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of the Father's person (Hebrews 1:3).

In this circumstance we are taught that God desires to manifest Himself in all His fullness through men in bodies of flesh. The church, as the body of Christ, is the one place where He can and is willing for this to happen (Ephesians 1:22, 23). It only happens because the Christ dwells there in the body and shares Himself with every member as they are willing to receive His fullness.

Just as it pleased the Father for that fullness of Himself to dwell bodily in the Man, so it pleases Him for the same fullness to dwell in the body of Christ made up of men. But they must be willing and submissive.

Only so can they come into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians

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4:13). This is the true "edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). The ministry gifts were supplied for this purpose and are to last until it is accomplished (vs. 11, 12). Certain of the gifts, of course, have served their purpose and are not continuing today, but that is another subject.

When this maturity is accomplished, when this fullness of the Christ is manifest in the body, because He is allowed to dwell in our hearts by faith, then the "spirit of Christ" will be evident in the church.

This is the spirit of love, of compassion, of spiritual sweetness, of understanding, of spiritual power, of effective testimony, of mercy and longsuffering, of patience and love, and whatever else of the Divine image which ought to be manifest in Jesus was manifest in Him.

That image is to be restored in us and it should become evident while we live in this world. If we expect to be conformed to the image of Christ in the next age, but have not submitted to have the necessary changes wrought in us in this life, then I fear we shall be disappointed then too.

Perhaps just enough of what is meant by the spirit of Christ has been given to interest the sincere reader. It will receive more extended and specific treatment as we proceed in this work.

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<sup>1</sup> "Christian" in the Bible was used in derision by those who were not followers of Christ. They supposed to add a stigma to any who identified with the Christ Who had been crucified (Acts 11:26 ; Acts 26:28 ; 1 Peter 4:16).

## Chapter One

# WHY MEN REJECT THE TRUTH

### Introduction

The business of conveying to the minds and hearts of others what we all need to know is fraught with many variables. It requires understanding of the subject and of men. It is expensive and time-consuming. It is never seasonal but requires a full-time application. Even when we come to a congregation of believers, all of whom have supposedly trusted the Lord and have professed a willingness to know more about Him, there are still many limiting factors. Because there are certain elements of logic (language, culture, prejudices, education, distractions) which slow a reception of the lesson, and because these elements are a part of the communication process, both the limitations of the hearers and of the speaker (or writer) are factors to be dealt with if we would bring men to a knowledge of the Truth.

The largest element is that Truth is more than knowledge, more than mere fact. Fact becomes Truth when one submits to it in His heart, feeling a willingness to obey. This element reaches beyond all of the natural factors, the variables (culture, custom, education, language, human limitations of body and mind). "The things of the Spirit...are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Here again we have much clearing away of preconceptions before we can present the Truth. People think of "spiritual" as one or more of the following: emotional, ethical, moral, cultural, esthetical, or some similar abstract consideration. Thus they think they are seeing the spirit of Christ when they see friendliness, or tears, or artistic renditions, or charity. These are not necessarily spiritual at all.

The spirit of Christ may have contained these elements, but that is not what makes them spiritual. Spiritual means "*of the Spirit.*" It is that which is wrought by the presence and power of the Spirit. '*Spirit of Christ,*' then, requires the working of the Holy Spirit but it is not the Spirit Himself; it is rather the *result* or a *disposition* reflecting His work.

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The outward marks which we have mentioned may be evident in subjective men. These signs may also be simulated by others. They may be the result of factors entirely removed from the working of the Spirit of Christ or of God.

Joy often shows in tears as well as in laughter. Joy may also be present without the presence of tears or laughter. Compassion often shows in tears, but it may be better shown in helping hands, a prayerful disposition, or a comforting presence. What men are able to see is external and may not be a proper criterion for determining the presence of a Christ-like spirit. Spirituality can be seen by men; by both saved and lost men, but it comes across in ways which men are not able to understand nor explain.

Men may reject the Truth before thee because it is not what they understand as "*logical*" or "*natural*." Whether or not a thing is logical to us is determined by our own limited experiences. Usually that which is outside our own experiences may seem illogical or unreasonable.

The thing which is new or different is often rejected for this same reason. Such an attitude is unreasonable, though, for it suggests that what we have learned or experienced is the total of wisdom and we are not willing to allow further manifestations. We would not take such an attitude in a science class, or in a farming experience, but it is far too frequently the attitude we express in a manifestation of religious experience.

I am not overlooking an intuitive element in our nature which makes us seek to see or hear or experience "new things." This should forestall our rejection of things just because they are new. But in religion we have a brash mind which assumes we are authorities in such learning. It is the meanest pride which measures all matters of the heart by one's own experience, as though one has already learned all there, is to know about such things.

This is a weakness of certain denominational groups: they reject what does not originate with themselves, or is not believed in their own circle, as though they understood all of the Truth. Some even brand everything else as 'new light.' This

term is often found in this context in church history.

## **I. CENTURIES OF WISDOM**

- A. Certain fundamentals of the faith, things established through many centuries as the belief of godly men, and have been incorporated into the creeds of faithful men, may not quickly be overturned or rejected as untrue.
- B. If some sect rises and denies the deity of Christ we may safely reject that sect as not being of God, for that truth has been dealt with, discussed, tried and proved, over and over again.
- C. The same is true of the doctrine of the trinity, of the inspiration of the Scriptures and their full acceptance as the only source of spiritual understanding. Here lies one of the fundamentals by which every sect, every door-to-door representative of any religion, may be tried.
- D. Do not be afraid of the groups who come in twos and try to take advantage of you. Does he speak what is in the Word? If you challenge him and he reads you a passage, note whether he tries to tell you that it is not translated properly, or certain words do not mean what is there recorded. He must stand by the Word.
- E. These purveyors of new ideas will lean on their university degree, or on their travels to other lands, or on some exotic philosophy, and will presume to understand the meaning in cultural, emotional, or theological notions. God's truth does not depend upon education, on travel, on cultural foibles, on emotional crises, or experiences of men. The measure of God's Truth is manifest in the Christ-like spirit of the man who preaches it and is supported by the words of the Bible. Nothing else is needed.
- F. Truth is not the servant of your studies, though learning may serve the Truth. Culture and experiences are not the measure of what is right. In discerning spiritual things — and that is the way we know spiritual things -- one must have begun with the Spirit's words. These are



found in the sixty-six books of the Word of God, the Bible. Whatever is more than these, or whatever is contradictory to these, is not the Truth.

- G. The champions of the sects feel that later men, or their writings, are just as valuable as the Bible for determining the Truth. They believe that men of stature in their world have as much authority as Christ and the apostles. It is a favorite ploy of such to list Jesus right along with Buddha, Gautama, Mohamet or Confucius or Baha-u-lal.
- H. A reading of the writings of such men may show a lot of wise thoughts (usually picked up from sources before their time, if not from the Bible itself), but there is always a lot more that contradicts what the Bible says.
  - 1) I can see it and I think any ordinary Bible reader can see it too. Who shall we believe? God, in His Word, or these self—promoting cult leaders?
  - 2) The blind are still not escaped from the pride of leading other blind ones. They both shall fall into the ditch. How sad to seethe unlearned parroting the words of some Baha-u-lal or Gautarna, thinking they are “sacred writings,” blind to the fact that they contradict the Bible, or feeling that it is the Bible that is wrong.
  - 3) Satan, the god of this world, is zealously promoting cultism, the occult, and every sort of deception in these days, which is one sign that we are in the last days.

## **II. DO WE MEASURE BY SCIENCE?**

- A. Among young educated people today there is a feeling that science holds the key to all knowledge. But matters of the heart cannot be measured by the kind of science that is limited to material things, nor even to matters of the emotions.
- B. The religion of secular humanism (for it calls itself a religion) is a self—declared determiner of what is right and

measures only by what men feel at the moment to be right. Just how much of this lies at the root of man's religious activities might surprise even those under the spell of this destructive cult.

- C. This doctrine says, "What I feel is right for me, is right. What I feel I want to do is the thing which I should be allowed to do. What the majority of a people want should be the goal and law of the land. The consensus of opinion in a country should govern that country." This is reasonable, to the humanists, for they hold that man is his own god and his whole destiny lies in his own hands.

### **III. ARE PRESSURE TACTICS THE RIGHT DETERMINERS?**

- A. America is fast headed toward this form of situation. Even the Supreme Court is influenced to make decisions in the light of what they feel is the consensus of public opinion. They may err in what that opinion is, for those with the greatest voice may not truly represent the majority of the population. This is not a new idea. In the days of the judges in Israel "every man did that which was right in his own eyes."
- B. Man cannot do what is right in his own eyes. He must begin with the Truth about himself: that he is a sinner by nature, by practice, and by choice. Before one can accept this principle, he must believe that there is one authoritative source for determining morality. When the mob determines right we are governed by anarchists. Many good men, moved by the best of intentions, sincere when they act, are controlled by error.
- C. When the civil rights movement followed the leadership of preachers and Journalists, authors, commentators, and lawyers, and took to the street in "civil disobedience," they were sincere and their cause was just. But their methods were entirely wrong and it opened the door to a Pandora's box of evils which now hold forth in America. Civil government is God's order for a civilized

society. When it is put down by civil disobedience what is to take its place?

- D. Following that example we now have marches by every sort of rebel the country has ever known demanding their "rights." We even see the Senate Of the United States Jeopardizing an action which they and the majority of the nation wanted just to force the consideration of another issue which some of them wanted. This is not orderly and violates the civil rights of many.
- E. But God has indicated that this principle of civil government which He ordained to preserve order in the world would break down and allow the revelation of the man of sin, the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:6,7). It seems that this circumstance is fast coming upon the world today.
- F. In every one of these "marches" and "demonstrations" we have the voice of people, wanting their own way, and proceeding to get it by pressure tactics. It is bad enough when such tactics are used against a company or corporation (a strike), but when it is against government it is nothing less than anarchy.
- G. Before we throw out these considerations let us take note of "that which letteth" (hinders), and "will let (hinder) until it be taken out of the way (midst)" (2 Thessalonians 2:7).
- H. This definitely seems to be a reference to civil government. The power of evil is restrained by government when that government is according to laws based on God's Word (cf. 1 Timothy 1:8-11 ; 1 Timothy 2:1, 2 ; Romans 13:1-7), as America's laws were from the beginning.
- I. Now, however, we are seeing this base eroded. The civil disobedience, sit-ins (strikes), and demonstrations, with or without violence, are eroding civil government and making the will of the common people as expressed in pressure groups, even minorities, the base for right and wrong. No land can long exist when such is its basis for

government, any more than one can be ruled by an oligarchy of atheists and criminals and preserve peace and righteousness thereby.

- J. May we settle one thing in our thinking: I may like my own feelings very well and I want my own way; so does everyone else. I may like the practices of my group and the customs of my community or my state or my church. I may prefer the culture of my race or country. But in the face of all these is that one consideration which must be faced some time and the sooner the better: There must be one fundamental and trustworthy authority.
- K. For Christians this is GOD and His will as it is expressed in the Bible. But not all of us are Christians and many who profess to be are not of the same mind with the rest of us. For a government there must be a standard. For America this was the Constitution.
- L. A separation of powers is provided for by that document so that standard would not be infringed on by any one department of government.
- M. A Supreme Court, unaffected by the threat of losing office, but supposedly free to interpret according to the original intent, was provided for originally to give us a settled judgment as to the meaning of that document.
- N. But just as in the case of reading the Scriptures, people want to read into them and out of them just what they like, so the Court has followed its own feelings, or listened to the voice of the multitude, and have turned meanings into decisions which reflect the changing of standards.
- O. Those who framed the Constitution did not intend for the President to be a dictator, so he was restrained by the fact he had to pledge to uphold the Constitution. The framers did not intend that the Congress should be the arbiters of law and right, so they must pledge to uphold and defend the Constitution.

- P. And two houses were formed for the Congress with certain limitations as to the manner of their formulating laws, so that there would be a constant answering to the people because of elections, yet a certain liberty from the political pressures of public opinion because of a less frequent election by at least one of those houses. The Court was to be even less subject to the foibles of the crowd by the fact it was not to be subject to elections at all.
- Q. These things, together with our being a republic (not a democracy), were all designed to safeguard stated principles of the original Constitution. A democracy has the weakness of clay (cf. Daniel 2:40-43). A dictatorship may have the strength of iron. So our standards set forth in the beginning have been eroded because people have not been willing to let the original Constitutional standards stand. That document, based as it was on Common Laws which originated with the Scriptures, was intended to be a permanent standard. Morality and right do not change. People do. This is why it insisted upon a government of laws and not of men.
- R. The same constraints must be recognized among Christians in the things which are called spiritual. This is why we must not have a Pope or a College of Cardinals or House of Bishops to determine what we shall believe. When governed by men the changing hearts of people can bring pressures to bear upon these ruling Bishops or human leaders and a way will be found to keep people happy by undermining the principles of Truth.
- S. But a later generation will be unhappy with the earlier and sore changes will be called for. This is why Catholicism came into being. It is why Protestantism later arose and why it has divided so many times and gone in

so many directions. But the Lord's church is different. It has Christ for its Head, according to the Scriptures, and He always acts consistent with that written standard which He originally gave to the church.

#### **IV. AN UNCHANGING STANDARD**

- A. Language may change and men may be influenced to see meanings in a different light. But Christ does not change. Spiritual discernment will afford men the same meanings as given in the first place, even in spite of changes in men, in cultures or in languages.
- B. This situation of constancy of sense and application according to Truth, however, is preserved only where "the spirit of Christ" is allowed to prevail. This calls for surrendered hearts -- hearts which have faith.
- C. So, again, we see why it is most important to know what is the spirit of Christ and how it is to be maintained among His people.
- D. Spiritual wisdom must come from God, and from Him alone. The safeguard of the written Word is infringed by language changes, even when men are honest and sincere in dealing with it. As time passes the very same words come to have different meanings. (See an example of a word which has the very opposite meaning from what it had when the translators of the Authorized Version was made in 1611 –
  - 1) 2 Thessalonians 2:7 – The word "let" in this verse actually means "to hinder."
  - 2) As the age draws to a close, this danger (hindrance) will become greater, but God promises to supply His wisdom to those who will receive it, and others shall not be able to prevent it (Luke 21:15).
- D. God's hidden wisdom is, therefore, not limited to words alone, though it must always be in accord with the written Words. It shines through in the life of "the hidden man of the heart," bearing Its effective testimony (1 Peter 3:1-8).

- E. It is in this way that believers are “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14-16). Christians need only “let it shine.” God shall never leave Himself without witness (Acts 14:17). While this particularly refers to His providences, it is also true of righteous lives. Prophets and righteous men have always been around to behold the workings of God’s providences (Matthew 13:17).
  
- F. It may appear that God’s cause is in danger of failing, judged by the lack or slackness of men claiming to represent Him. But He has always had the “seven thousand” who have not bowed the knee to human idols (Romans 11:4). It is through these witnesses that He perpetuates His cause and preserves His testimony through the age.

## Chapter Two

# The Testimony Of God

### Introduction

In this chapter it will be shown how that God preserves to Himself a pure testimony, a bright light, in a dark world.

The many voices, all sounding an urgent call, coming from differing denominations, sometimes contradicting and even contentious, provide the alien sinner with an *excuse*: "There are so many churches I do not know what to believe."

If there were no other churches than the one the Lord Himself started while here on earth there would still be rebels finding reasons for not believing God and turning to Him.

Still, Christians are to be blamed in whatever measure they have provided such confusions to distract men.

Note: The following subtopics [A through E] were taken, with slight revisions, from the November 1982 REMINDER.

### **I. THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST**

- A. Do all believers have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them? It is offensive to ask most believers this question. They do not want anyone to question that this may be true. I ask, What good is it to claim that one has the indwelling Holy Spirit if he does not have the spirit of Christ?
- B. When I speak of the spirit of Christ I do not refer to the Spirit which was *in* Christ. The Holy Spirit came upon Him, at least from His baptism (Matthew 3:6). I do not doubt that He was "anointed with the oil of gladness" even earlier than His baptism. But at least from that time there was the public acclaim afforded by the Spirit upon Him. Even when He was a lad of twelve (Luke 2:42), He knew He was a Son of the Father (vs. 49), thus giving evidence of His anointing.
- C. Again, it is not the fact of His having the Spirit that I speak of in this exposition. The subject is "the spirit of Christ" — that *disposition* which was His by virtue of His



submission to the Father. That disposition was the reflection of His Father in Him being visible in His life in spite of the human flesh in which He lived.

- D. He was "the express image of the Father's Person" (Hebrews 1:3), even "the brightness of His glory." That "glory" is, I believe, the evidence of the Divine attributes which were in Him. God's wisdom, power, love, righteousness, holiness, mercy, goodness, and all of the others, were manifest in Him. These are the attributes of God and these are His glory in our sight and in our lives.
- E. These same attributes in their fullness (Colossians 1:19 ; Colossians 2:9) were in the Christ, and these are His glory. These were shining in His face, a figurative statement meaning that these were seen to men's eyes in His life (2 Corinthians 4:6).
- F. The knowledge of such glory in Him is astonishing to us even yet, and it confounded those who saw it during His personal ministry on earth (Matthew 7:29 ; Luke 4:32, 36 ; Mark 5:42).
- G. It was not only His knowledge which afforded rebuke from His enemies, but it was His patience, His tenderness, His love, and His meekness. Until this day these qualities in a man still provoke amazement, and the very report of them in a man stirs one either to long for such in His own life or it stirs him to anger that one should have such qualities.
- H. That Jesus was all that the Scriptures claim for Him is not questioned by the man of faith. That men ought to be as much like Him as possible is a holy aspiration.

## **II. PREACHING IN THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST**

- A. How can one preach in *the spirit of Christ*?
  - 1) It must mean that one shows the same disposition which Christ reflected in His preaching.
  - 2) This manifested the glory of His Father, particularly

in all those elements which ought to be evident in a man.

- B. When God made Adam He made him in His own image.
  - 1) This does not mean that Adam looked like God or had a body like God, since God is Spirit.
  - 2) It means that the man was able to exercise the independence of will, reason, and to feel the emotions and to think in the manner that God does.
  - 3) Further, he was constituted after the Person of God, being a spiritual being who lives in a body of flesh.
  - 4) Because these two are conjoined there is a third element in him, also like God: he is a soul.
- C. This means that he is capable of consciously knowing and evaluating his surroundings and exercising himself relative to them. If there is around him a work which needs to be done he is disposed to do it. If there is suffering he tends to show mercy towards it. If there is weakness he will tend to add strength or help. This is the way God is.
- D. But when sin entered the picture this capacity of Adam was seriously impaired. This disposition we may correctly call the spirit (small "s") of God. Now that man has fallen into sin he shows less and less of this "spirit." By "spirit" we are not talking of an entity of a man's being, as when we say he is "spirit, soul, and body." We are referring to his disposition.
- E. Preaching in the spirit of Christ, then, is to manifest the same disposition which Christ manifested in His preaching.
- F. There is no doubt that God has preserved for Himself witnesses in all ages and places (Acts 14:17). But are we willing to believe that He has men in all ages to bear His testimony? By this we mean, not simply that they are willing to talk and to give their opinions, but that they are willing to bear His testimony.

- G. Do we want to learn what it means to preach in the spirit of Christ?
- 1) Most men would have difficulty explaining just what he likes to hear in a sermon or 'Bible lesson, though he has questions about the meaning or sense of many things.
  - 2) We know what we like to hear, and we know what brings disinterest when we hear a man who does not please us. (Bear with me while I deal with this delicate issue.
  - 3) I feel that I can listen with as much interest as most anyone, yet there are times when I am not "moved" or "touched" by what I am hearing, even when the contents may be Biblically sound.
  - 4) This could be my own cold heart. But it could be a wrong spirit in the man who is preaching, even when he is speaking the Truth).
- H. One man preaches with great power and the Holy Spirit is able to use his testimony to touch and bless the hearts of God's people and even to convict the hearts of lost men.
- 1) There may not seem to be anything "new," or forceful, in the words.
  - 2) It may have been rather halting and lacking in polish, but there was power.
  - 3) How many of us preachers have not yearned to preach always with such power! I am not speaking of clear speech, sound doctrine, and logical presentation. Some may think it is the preacher's knowledge which produces great preaching.
  - 4) Some like a story because it is interesting. Some look for entertainment and expect illustrations with humor and pathos. All of this is "letter" and "the letter kills."
  - 5) It may sound great and we may go away praising

the man's ability or his knowledge. But if it does not cause us to go away humbled, edified, convicted, rejoicing, or praising the Lord, it likely is not "able" preaching and not "of the spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:6).

- I. True, so little preaching is "of the spirit" until most people never are able to judge its merits properly. They have not heard enough of such preaching to be able to measure others. But there is able preaching in the Bible. There we can find the kind which will genuinely touch the heart. Anyone who has been born again is able to tell when a message exalts the Christ and when his own heart is blessed.
- J. After many years of a kind of preaching which reflected my own judgment and ability I finally came to see that God is not seeking a right "letter" sermon only, but he would produce a "testimony" in the man.
  - 1) He would deal with us preachers until we think the thoughts of God, feel the heartbeat, know the compassion, feel the indignation, experience the yearning, and become obsessed with the very will of God.
  - 2) How can I give a testimony of that which I have not seen, heard, or felt? If I read of it or hear of it, I may be able to repeat what I have heard or read, but until it has wrought its influence in my own heart and life, become a part of my experience, I am not able to speak of it with real conviction or witness to it in power.
- K. Please do not think that I am speaking merely of more thorough preparation and better understanding of the subject. The Apostle Paul insists that preaching is not merely to be "with excellency of speech or of wisdom" but is to be "the testimony of God" (1 Corinthians 2:1). If it is "the testimony of God" it does not need "the enticing words of man's wisdom." Do not suppose that this is merely referring to false doctrine. But the message received will, indeed, be false when it is presented as

the enticing words of man's wisdom.

- L. On the other hand, it may be the very truth of God and still be presented in "the enticing words of man's wisdom." How? It may have all the right words, but may be loaded with the burden of a wrong disposition on the part of the speaker. His artificial tears, tone of voice, facial expressions or questioning look, his general manner — in fact, many things — may becloud the words of Truth which are being spoken.
- M. The most extreme example of this would be when he obviously meant to deny what he was saying, as in cynicism.
  - 1) But however it comes across to his hearers it does not have the power of the Truth unless the Holy Spirit gives it that power and this the Holy Spirit does not do when the speaker himself has not felt the weight of the words and has not sought the power of the Spirit before presenting it.
  - 2) Until the preacher knows something of that "weakness," "fear," and "trembling" which Paul felt he is likely to use "enticing words of man's wisdom."
- N. And when he has not experienced these very elements there will not be that which is "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Corinthians 2:3, 4).
- O. Oh, how likely we are to "preach ourselves" (2 Corinthians 4:5)! No, we do not do it intentionally, maybe, but until we have dealt with the "old man," or "been dealt with" by God, we are likely to decorate the "earthen vessel" (2 Corinthians 4:7) and the sufficiency will be of us and not of God (2 Corinthians 3:5).

### **III. THE SPIRIT'S WAY**

- A. How can we avoid the very real risk of injecting our wisdom, of demonstrating our education? How do we preach in God's power and not our own?

- B. Until the Truth has become real to us in experience we will likely be poor instruments. A man cannot bear a testimony which he does not have. One must know whereof he speaks and not merely bear a report of it, if he is to succeed. And for it to be "the testimony of God" it must be one which God has borne.
- C. There is some question whether the word should be "testimony" or "mystery," as it is the word *marturion* (*marturion*) or *musterion* (*musterion*) in the original Greek text). In either case it has to come from God, for no one knows His secrets except as He reveals them (the word "mystery" carries in it the idea of "secret").
- D. And when He reveals His mysteries or bears a testimony it is only to one willing to submit himself so as to experience in his own life the truth of God. This experience is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit. His part is to will and to do of His own good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).
- E. As Paul explained, the attributes of God have been revealed in us. In one place he says that it pleased the Father to "reveal His Son" in US (Galatians 1:16). Again he says that the goal is that Christ be for us (Galatians 4:19).
- F. Further, still, he says that it is like when God caused the darkness to be dispersed by the light in the beginning when He said, "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3).
- G. "God...hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6).
- H. So the shining in Christ's face (His life) is duplicated in the shining in our hearts. In Jesus' life it was "the brightness of the (Father's) glory." In us it is the same glory. In Jesus it was the brightness, the fullness, of God. In us it is the fullness insofar as we allow the Spirit to fill us (Ephesians 1:23).
- I. The fullness of God in Christ caused men to witness the very Person of God.

- 1) God's love, His grace, His power, His wisdom, His righteousness, and all of His glory were evident in the disposition of His Son.
  - 2) This was wrought by the anointing which He had of the Spirit. We have the same sort of anointing (1 John 2:20, 27).
  - 3) By Christ being formed in us, He is revealed in us. In this way He always "causeth us to triumph in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:14), and He "maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place."
- J. This makes us a "sweet savour of Christ." This is what I am calling "the spirit of Christ!" It is a *sweet savor*, a *sweet disposition*. It manifests God as He wants men to see Him. To those who receive the sweetness He becomes life, and we are the sweetness of that life. To those who reject the testimony of that life in its sweetness we become the stench of death, a harbinger of the fear of hell to come.
- K. In a sense, there is one "death" the sinner does not want to die now. Of course he does not want to die physically, but he especially does not want to be separated (which is the meaning of death) from the pleasures of sin.
- L. The sweetness of the believer's life does not suggest pleasure or peace to the rebel, but a warning of the consequences of his sins and an announcement that he would have to die to all that.
- M. So he neither wants to lose the pleasures of his way of life nor be reminded that there is a *real* death coming which only introduces him to the God before Whom he must give account; and he knows that he is not ready for that! All this is God's doing, and by this He works out His own nature before the eyes of others.

#### **IV. WHAT AM I SAYING?**

- A. The Christian communicates to other men the testimony

of God. I do not say "a testimony about God," but it is God's own testimony of Himself, borne of us.

- 1) We cannot merely teach them facts about a historical cross, but we demonstrate to them the reality of the power of that cross in our own lives.
  - 2) The sinner in us is crucified, that is, we have died to the world. Further, the world is crucified to us (Galatians 6:14). It holds no more attraction than a corpse would. Its ways are not our ways.
  - 3) We have a new life and a new nature which rejoices in God and in the things of God. If we are not communicating this spirit to others then we are likely communicating ourselves in our old natures.
  - 4) That nature loves the world and its ways. If we find joy in its commerce, its entertainments, its fellowships, its hopes, its ways, that is the "message" we extend to others. This ought not to be!
- B. One may feel that his language, his dress, or his lifestyle makes no difference. The more we are like the world in anything, the less our testimony will convey Christ to the world.
- C. If the preacher conveys a spirit of wisdom (scholarship), of sharpness (of repartee), of fleshly confidence (worldly wisdom), or of mere camaraderie (not properly differentiating between things spiritual and things natural), he may exalt himself, but not the Lord.
- D. The 'social graces' are, properly speaking, not *graces* at all. We should not confuse things which are in truth different such as sociability and love. Sociability is not necessarily love; at least not *spiritual* love. By the same token, conviviality and friendship are not *spiritual fellowship*. All these delicate relationships do touch the lives of others, and they may be very pleasant and desirable, but they are *not* spiritual in themselves and they do *not* convey the *spirit of Christ*.



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## V. THE SWEET SAVOR OF CHRIST

- A. When a believer conveys the sweet savor of Christ our Lord he becomes mighty as an instrument for effective working in God's hands. His life, both his words and his actions, his very presence, become a means of conveying a touch of life to others -- or a touch of death! (2 Corinthians 2:15,16).
- 1) It is a sweet savor, whether toward those who are saved or toward those who are perishing. In the one it is the sweetness of life.
  - 2) In the other it becomes the sickening evidence of death. A true believer, conveying this spirit of Christ, is never neutral. His presence, his words, and his deeds wield a power upon others.
  - 3) This power is uplifting to the man who knows the Lord but who, at the moment, may be spiritually low (or lower than he would like to be). It encourages, rejoices, strengthens, builds hope and faith.
  - 4) This is not dependent upon a Bible discussion, a doctrinal explanation, though one may be involved. The communication is rather a spiritual communication than an intellectual lesson.
- B. The believer who has the spirit of Christ causes an uneasiness in the sinner. He does not have to be saying words which rebuke. His very presence, whether in his joy in God or his loathing of sin, whether spoken directly or indirectly, or maybe not even spoken at all, will tend to convict the sinner. The sweetness of his person will signal death to the rebel. Whether it drives him completely away or not is dependent upon the man himself. Some men are not yet so hard but that they are seeking for answers. Others are on the run and may never be restrained.
- C. A ministry which is what it should be will have in it this spirit of Christ. If it merely has scholarship, organizational or promotional expertise, zeal, and strategy, it is

not a *spiritual* ministry. Preaching must have spiritual power and to do this it must contain the spirit of Christ. A message about Christ may be helpful and the Spirit may overrule the coldhearted preacher. But if consistent spiritual results are to come there must be the spirit of Christ.

- D. This is not said to detract from the value of knowledge or zeal or ability.
- 1) God can use all of these, provided the minister has the spirit of Christ. But these can never substitute for true spiritual power.
  - 2) The great preacher may not have as much knowledge as he would like and his abilities may be very limited.
  - 3) Many preachers of a few years ago, men who had to plow or barber for a living, and who had little time for study, were often great powers in the pulpit and in their personal testimony.
  - 4) This does not mean that they never studied, but that they did not have formal schooling. They found time for meditation between the plow handles or on horseback on the way to their appointments. Or they rose early and beat the sun to meet with the Lord. They knew they were not sufficient within themselves, so they sought grace to make up the lack.
  - 5) Perhaps a negative feature of schooling is that sometimes a sense of confidence is created by virtue of learning which, in turn, prevents such seeking of grace.
- E. The spirit of Christ is evident in humility, patience, love, longsuffering; in zeal to help, in prayer and yearning for the will of the Lord. It consistently minds the things of the Spirit and prays for the will of the Lord to be done. It finds no sufficiency in self, but only in Him.
- F. While we are specially mindful of the need of this spirit

in ministers who preach, every believer is a minister and needs this spirit of Christ.

- G. A spiritual understanding of the principle of which we are speaking throws light on many passages of God's Word. Particularly, it explains how God's testimony is still His while being spoken, or represented by man. It explains how He still does the willing as well as the doing. It realizes that God can live His own life, think His own thoughts, and exercise His emotions within a man, using his physical body as He did the body of Jesus when lie was here. The church is that body today.

## **VI. GOD'S MEANS OF TESTIFYING**

- A. Look back with me to the beginning of the human race and note just how God communicated with His new creation. It seems that perhaps we have not grasped just what was lost in the Fall of Man. No doubt there was some means of communion between man and God in the Garden of Eden.
- 1) It is not described specifically, though language might suggest that God was like a man, having a body, and talking with Adam and Eve.
  - 2) The record suggests that there was direct, and possibly immediate communication, as when God commanded Adam, saying, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16, 17). Other things are quoted as having been said by God.
- B. Are we to presume that God had assumed a body with vocal organs which could set up vibrations so that Adam could hear the sound of words? Or would we rather assume that He set up these sounds supernaturally, so that communication could be made? I do not object to either idea, but I rather presume it was on a different fashion.

- C. Consider it this way: Adam was made a spiritual being. God had formed a body of the dust and breathed into that body a breathing of lives (plural). So he had physical life; he had soulical life; and he had spiritual life.
- 1) Such a living being was coordinated in such a way that one part of his being was fully aware of the other parts.
  - 2) So communication could have been by way of his ears, with sounds which would have been translated to his mind' (an aspect of the soul) so that he could understand and evaluate what was said.
  - 3) But this would not have been the only way. God can and does communicate with living spirits directly, since God is Spirit.
  - 4) I have reason to believe this is the way God communicated with Adam and I think Eve, a counterpart of Adam, could understand in the same way.
  - 5) No sounds, not even words would have been essential to such communication. I am not confined to my imagination to come to this conclusion.
- D. Is this not the way He spoke to me and to you who believe, in the first moment of our faith? You heard no sounds of words. Nobody was speaking to you, perhaps. At least there was no one else who could have known what was happening in your heart, but in your heart you knew. "Surprised by joy," is the way C. S. Lewis described it.
- E. Perhaps you were surprised at the sudden realization that your sins were gone. You had peace. What relief! You knew that you had been accepted by the Lord and that you were saved. No sound of words, yet complete understanding. Mysterious? Yes, but, oh, so sweet.
- F. How did this information of your regeneration come to you? You might say, "It happened to me." So it did, but how did you know what had happened? A moment before you had no understanding, even, of what was

needed, much less of how it could be done. Now you know it has been done. You still may not know how, but you know that God has done it, that you are the beneficiary, and you have the satisfaction in your heart that the work has been wrought.

- 1) Maybe it was later that you learned that *regeneration* is what had occurred.
- 2) A work of the Spirit had changed your feelings and your relationship to God.
- 3) And then you learned that the same Spirit had communicated the reality of it all to your consciousness.
- 4) This is *spiritual communication*. From then on you can, and often do, have the assurance that "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16).

G. Doubts may and will come. Sins crowding into our lives will dim this testimony. Rebellion will even cut off this witness of the Spirit. But it is a possibility for those whose spirits have been quickened to new life in regeneration.

- 1) Others cannot receive such communication from the Holy Spirit. They must read the written Word or be stricken with the testimony of God through the hearing of the ear or the sight of the eyes, as it is borne by a believer, his life, or his words.
- 2) The sinner's spirit, though dead, in the sense that it is separated from God, is not dead in the sense of non-existence or inability to be touched by certain information conveyed from the soul.

H. One may be taught "right" and "wrong." This is a matter of mind (soul), but the ability to create a conscience comes strictly from the fact that one is a spiritual being.

- 1) Animals do not have a conscience. They can be taught to respond to commands or situations; they have no moral compunctions.

- 2) Only a man has that. This is because he is a spirit, a soul, and a body. The 'spirit' of the beast is more like his breath which sustains his physical life.
- I. Before the Fall (because of sin) I feel that Adam simply thought the thoughts of God. By this I mean that God caused him to think His thoughts. But he had the capacity to interpose his own thoughts (imagination) and could even reach conclusions contrary to God's thoughts. This is the way he came to sin. How do we suppose he had such tremendous wisdom?
  - J. Yes, God could have created him with a brain already loaded with a language and with understanding of all that he understood. I rather suppose all this came by a spiritual communion.
    - 1) And this communion was not merely of facts, but included feelings (joy, peace, desire to please, loneliness, companionship, or affection, and many more), skills, discernment, memory, and who knows how much else!
    - 2) But when he rebelled against God he "died" that very day. This means that what had been supplied daily and directly from God to his consciousness through spiritual communion was no longer supplied.
    - 3) Satan had suggested that he would gain some knowledge, as though God had held out on him. But what he learned was painful, embarrassing, debilitating, and limiting. He is now spiritually dead; and this nature, with its concomitant death, has been communicated to all of Adam's seed.
  - K. A recovery is effected in our regeneration, when the spirit of man is quickened to life again, but it is very limited. The power of the curse largely explains this. But we can again communicate with God directly and He with us. His thoughts, His will, His emotions can again be conveyed to our consciences. But this calls for a submission which is very difficult in the face of the curse

with its toil, its disappointment, the sweat, all of which are still on man. So many distractions!

- L. Thus, we are called on to "seek the Lord." But how can one seek when he is distracted in so many ways so much of the time?
- 1) He must will to do so. This will is one of the capacities of the soul of man. There also he experiences the emotions, many of which are painful and 'undesirable.
  - 2) There also is the mind which must accept the Truth of God by His various revelations, and having weighed the values and consequences of his choices he must' make the right choices.
- M. If the regenerated man has so many distractions which cause him to forget God's Truth, how much more is the alien sinner affected.
- 1) We need all of those means which God has provided for bringing to the attention, repeatedly, the Truth which we need to know.
  - 2) Both before and after man has become quickened to spiritual life, he needs to know the Truth; why?
  - 3) Because *every man* is obligated to live by the will of God.
- N. Many lost sinners delay making any move to get right with God, making the excuse that they want to "sow their wild oats" first; or the excuse that he is not ready, thinking that moral principles, religion, and righteousness is only for those who profess obedience.
- 1) Like it or not, he is under the curse; a curse designed to remind him of sin and its consequences.
  - 2) He has to work for a living. He has to face the multiplied conceptions of his wife and the increased sorrows of the bearing and bringing up of children. He has to face the prospect that death could lay hold of him at any minute.

- O. In most societies (all are obligated), he had to be conscious of the power of government; civil government being a provision of God with authority over men, even to the taking of the lives of those who take other men's lives.
- 1) This aspect of the Noahic Covenant extends over *all* men.
  - 2) So wherever there is the need to work, the necessity of suffering, the fact of death, the authority of government, we have God's testimony entering into the lives, even of lost men.
- P. The communication of these things is clear enough to one "with eyes to see and ears to hear," but blindness afflicts men's eyes. They do not see or hear. So God has provided numerous other means to supplement the testimony of toil, of sorrow, of death, and of governments.
- Q. At the first, each father was responsible to teach his own children; each mother was to bear a witness to her child.
- 1) But when a father was like Cain, a man of unrighteous works and selfish heart, how much Truth was there in' his testimony to his children?
  - 2) He did teach them of a god, but his teaching shows that he had changed the glory of the True God into something else, because it was in his line of descendants, separated from Adam and Abel and Seth, that religion began to be shaped after man's own contorted or distorted impression of God.
- R. It was with them that carnality began to wield such influence in the earth.
1. They were the ones who began to invent means of avoiding toil (they invented instruments of brass and iron (Genesis 4:22);
  2. They were the ones who dwelt in tents and became ranchers and shepherds of great flocks and herds (Genesis 4:20);



3. They were the ones who began to please themselves with various musical instruments (Genesis 4:21);
  4. They were the ones who introduced the flesh indulgence of bigamy (Genesis 4:23).
  5. They are the ones responsible for a human civilization which largely ignored the True God. If we could have been around to listen to Lamech boast we likely would have gotten a good lesson on civil rights and human rights, but there would likely have been little or nothing about God's rights.
- S. Fathers and mothers failed to teach their children and the world became such as brought about a flood (Genesis 6:5).
- 1) There were even supplied other witnesses to supplement the words of failing fathers: PROPHETS.
  - 2) Men like Enoch cried out against sin and warned of Judgment (Jude 14, 15). Noah was a preacher of righteousness. But his words were not heeded.
  - 3) Visible representations were provided as testimonies also.
  - 4) These are seen in the creation which has always told men of God's eternal power and Godhood (Romans 1:20).
  - 5) The heavens have always shown God's glory, speaking day and night to all nations of whatever language (Psalm 19:1-6).
  - 6) In addition to these natural things God has provided sacrifices (as when He slew animals and provided Adam and Eve clothing), and holy days.
  - 7) The Sabbath was an early testimony, later specifically pointing to as an indication of God's presence and the imperative of worshipping Him.
- T. Then God did another separating, as He had earlier separated prophets for special witness:

- 1) He separated a man and his seed - a nation - to be a witness.
  - 2) He declared that this was not a respect of persons but He did it so that at least one people might bear testimony of the True God.
  - 3) To these He gave His oracles (Romans 3:2).
  - 4) These oracles ("speakings") came by men (priests and prophets) and by ceremonies, days, dress, foods, sacrifices, and an almost unlimited array of reminders of God's existence; of His ways, His righteousness, His holiness, and His will.
- U. God has never left Himself without witness (Acts 14:17). Included in these testimonies were His providences (the weather, the fruitful harvests, the plentiful supply of man's needs). How blind must man be not to see on every side the evidences of a merciful and gracious God, yet a God Who is not pleased with man's ignoring Him!
- 1) The "lively oracles" (Acts 7:38) which God gave to the Fathers were designed to be passed down by them to us (cf. Romans 3:2 ; Revelation 5:12 ; 1 Peter 4:11).
  - 2) Perhaps the most effective of all of God's "speakings" are borne in the lives and words of His special people.
  - 3) Israel was a special nation to Him in the Old Testament.
  - 4) The church - local congregations — is such a people today.
  - 5) Yes, Israel failed because they were men and often *unregenerated* men.
  - 6) The church has its weaknesses today also; largely for the same reason.
  - 7) God has designed a means of screening out this element from His special people, but even these

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screening provisions are attacked by Satan and weak men become the victims.

- V. There were distinctive marks of His special people during the Old Testament times. Circumcision was ` such a mark.
- 1) The covenant separating this nation from all others had a promised Seed -- a Seed in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed.
  - 2) Every mother In Israel could have the hope and the desire that her son might be this Seed.
  - 3) Of course, after Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 7:14), if they understood it, this hope was to have been limited to virgins.
  - 4) Thus it became a curse, a special reproach, for a woman to fail to bear a son. Hannah reflects this feeling (1 Samuel 1:10, 11). Sarah must have felt it in the beginning. Circumcision was a sign to every man and every woman in Israel that God had made this promise to them.
- W. A *secondary testimony* of circumcision was its witness of the need for the cutting off of the flesh, the nature which men received from Adam (Colossians 2:11).
- 1) It seems universally true that just reminding men seems not to be enough.
  - 2) All of those holy days, ceremonies, sacrifices and observances; all that the normal man requires for special clothing; the limitations surrounding his plowing, planting, building, marrying, and worshiping (there were many of these) should have been reminders enough.
  - 3) Still, he forgot his God, forsook the covenants, walked in the imaginations of his own heart, and perverted the ways of his God. His flesh was constantly the ruling factor in his life.
- X. Likewise, the church is restricted to a regenerated peo-

ple who should not reflect their flesh. Every member is to be baptized in water before becoming a member. And before he is baptized the church receiving him is to satisfy itself that the man has truly trusted the Lord as Savior, having repented of his sins; and believing that he is now dead to sin and his past life, and is anxious to walk a new manner of life before the Lord.

- 1) Then they carry through with this testimony by burying this "dead" man in a *watery grave* (baptism) and resurrecting him (from that grave) in recognition of his truly having died to sin in regeneration and his having, been quickened to life (a spiritual life from the dead) again by the power of the Spirit.
- 2) Having received him into, membership they begin to watch over him in brotherly love lest the cares of this life, the lust of the flesh, and the pressures of the world and of Satan break his will and his resistance to sin.
- 3) God's motive in this is that He may preserve for Himself a witness, the body of Christ, the church, to show forth the "savour of His knowledge" in every place (2 Corinthians 2:14).

Y. NOTE: This rather lengthy section on "God's Means of Testifying" is designed to enable us to appreciate this direct dealing by God with man. Only by such appreciation can one come to think God's thoughts, feel His emotions, will His desires. We have noted the way it was before the Fall and what redeeming grace has done and is doing to allow this communion again.

## **VII. BEING "IN THE SPIRIT"**

A. It should be evident that in bearing the testimony of God no mere outward set of circumstances can guarantee success or effectiveness. All of the outward reminders and even the restrictions placed upon the natural man and the busyness called for by the days, ordinances, and limitations, the circumscriptions upon the whole life, were not enough to preserve a correct testi-

mony.

- 1) There are not enough limitations created by ordinances, services, prohibitions, and even by the prospect of discipline to permanently guarantee the effectiveness of a believer as a witness today.
- 2) Something has to be done to control the DISPOSITION. That disposition has to be consistent, sweet, caring, loving, zealous, persistent, and patient.
- 3) In Jesus is seen such a spirit. It is described as "a sweet savor of Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:15).
- 4) It is further described as "the savour of his knowledge" (vs. 14). This is a reference to our knowledge of Him, not of what He knew Himself. And there is no question but that God intends the same "savor" to fill our own lives. This is the *spirit of Christ*.

B. It was in the Person of Christ and it can be in the believer.

- 1) When one has this disposition he is said to be "in the spirit."
- 2) Often this phrase will be qualified in some particular manner as, "in the spirit of meekness" (Galatians 6:1), or "in the spirit of your mind" (Ephesians 4:23), or "praying in the spirit" (Ephesians 6:18), or "justified in the spirit" (1 Timothy 3:16).
- 3) spirit which is accounted righteous. Or it could refer to the Holy Spirit Who is the means by which a man is justified.
- 4) This latter, however, is most unlikely since there is no descriptive word "Holy" and neither is there an article.

C. Many times we are told to do certain things "in the spirit." For example, we are to "worship in the spirit," (Philippians 3:3). We are to "be an example... in spirit" (1 Timothy 4:12). The Colossians were com-

mended for their "love in the spirit" (Colossians 1:8).

- D. It seems necessary to insert here a matter which appears to be of a technical nature. The translators of the Authorized Version regularly capitalized the word "spirit" when they supposed the reference was to the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Godhead.
- 1) Some of the above references have this capitalization in the Authorized Version.
  - 2) My own observation leads me to believe that only if there is a definite article with "spirit," or maybe with both "spirit" and "Holy," or some other word that might make the reference definite, is the Person of the Holy Spirit meant.
  - 3) Each reader will have to determine whether he feels this making of those references to apply to the Holy Spirit is called for in these passages.
  - 4) Occasionally, the word "spirit" may simply refer to a man's spirit, but even this would be straining the sense, as it would be difficult to "walk in the spirit," as there seems to be no particular volition attached to the human spirit which could control the emotions of the soul.
  - 5) "Will" is an attribute of the soul, not of the spirit. When "the spirit is willing" the thought is more like "there is a willing spirit," meaning a disposition of willingness, not that one's spirit wills it, for willing is a characteristic of the soul rather than the spirit.
  - 6) The Charismatics' use of this phrase, "in the Spirit," as though it were always something involving the activity of the Holy Spirit is a misuse.
- E. True, the Holy Spirit plays a part in that disposition which we call "the spirit of Christ," but this is true only upon our being so wrought upon by Him through faith and obedience.
- 1) A "spirit of fear" (2 Timothy 1:7) would not be gen-

dered by the Holy Spirit, though Re might well be involved In "a spirit of faith" (2 Corinthians 4:13).

2) Still, the "spirit of faith," is not the Holy Spirit, but is in element of the "spirit of Christ" when Lt is gendered in the soul of the yielded believer.

F. By using a complete concordance you can find a great many references to the use of "spirit" in the phrase, "in the spirit," and it would be profitable to make a study of each.

G. Consider a study of these:

1) "speaking mysteries" "in the spirit" (1 Corinthians 14:2).

2) This evidently describes an ecstatic state, whether brought on by the Holy Spirit or by the emotion of the moment.

3) Granting that be is speaking to God, as the context shows, we still must consider the "spirit" to be that disposition, or state of the moment which the person is in and not necessarily borne by the Holy Spirit.

4) "prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:18)

5) This verse surely describes that disposition of the spiritual warrior. I see no justification for capitalizing the word 'spirit' in this passage.

### **VIII. "BY THE SPIRIT"**

A. Here again we have a phrase which is open to difference of opinion as to whether it means the Holy Spirit or the heated and zealous attitude of the man. See Acts 6:10 where the speaker is Stephen and we might well conclude that he spoke "by the Holy Spirit," and hence his words were very persuasive.

B. Still, someone else might show such warmth or fervor or love or persuasiveness as to sway people also. We see

much of this today. And it is not always bad. That is the spirit in which the servants of the Lord manifest the sweetness of Christ in their lives.

- 1) This last reference may simply refer to the human "According to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" is a difficult word for many of us.
  - 2) The translators did not use the capital on this word, evidently because they construed it to refer to a quality (attribute in the case of God) by which Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power.
  - 3) Now there is no question but that the Holy Spirit has attested the resurrection, for He was the One Who inspired the passage (cf. Romans 1:4) which tells us that Jesus was raised up by the Spirit (Romans 8:15).
  - 4) But our passage (Romans 1:4) is not telling us by whom Jesus was resurrected, but how He is declared to be the Son of God with power. This is "by the resurrection from the dead" "according to the spirit of holiness."
- C. Without seeming to question that this disposition is wrought in men by the Holy Spirit, I suggest that the "spirit of holiness" here is that awed, but bold disposition which the disciples received upon fully realizing that their Lord had come forth from the grave.
- 1) This spirit enabled them to speak in the face of all sorts of opposition and at the cost of loss of life and property.
  - 2) Similarly "the spirit which is of God" is not necessarily the Holy Spirit, being set as it is over against "the spirit of the world" (1 Corinthians 2:12).
  - 3) This latter is not Satan, though he is the instigator of it, and its opposite is not the Holy Spirit, though He is the instigator of that spirit of boldness, of wisdom, of holiness, of sweetness, of faith, etc.



- 4) This is the spirit of Christ! It is a "spirit of meekness" (1 Corinthians 4:21).
  - 5) It is "my spirit" when Paul promises its presence (1 Corinthians 5:4), but this is not his human spirit, nor the Holy Spirit, but "that spirit" which calls for the "the power of the Lord Jesus Christ" upon a company of submissive believers of a church.
- D. Paul could say "my spirit" just as he could say "my gospel."
- 1) He identified with these so intimately he did not feel embarrassed to say so. It is that spirit which must characterize an assembly when it assumes to discipline an unrepentant member (cf. Matthew 18:18-20).
  - 2) It certainly is not a judgmental spirit, as men know the term, nor a spirit of vengeance, nor a vindictive spirit, but one which Paul felt when he said he had "judged already" this matter of fornication in the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 5:3).
- E. "In one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13) is certainly not "by (the agency of) the Spirit" or Holy Spirit.
- 1) The very word "one" labels this as a "spirit of unity," or oneness which characterizes all those who come for baptism (in water) at the hands of a local church.
  - 2) It exists as "one" body because it preserves its entrance principles by baptism, approached with a "single" heart (like the "single eye," Matthew 6:22).
  - 3) Even the drinking "into one spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13) is simply that constant imbibing of this spirit of Christ which constantly overflows in the church.
- F. In connection with God's bearing a testimony for Himself, using His people as instruments, it is said that He has made us able ministers of the spirit of the new covenant (2 Corinthians 3:6).

- 1) You see that I have paraphrased the sense here, leaving out only the negative feature of a ministering of the word of the new covenant, because the letter kills, whereas the spirit gives life. Here the "spirit" is used twice in the verse.
  - 2) What is the sense? Are God's people to administer the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant? To ask the question is to answer it. He is His own administrator, not we. But we are to minister (that is, administer) something. It is not the letter of the new covenant.
  - 3) The whole Bible is given to us in letters, both Old and New Testaments. Learning those words and knowing something of their historical or literal import is essential, but when we speak of ministering the word of something we mean that we attempt to apply the literal import to men living in the body.
  - 4) To apply the "letter" of the law (Old Testament) would be to require that men in the flesh keep the Ten Commandments.
  - 5) To apply the letter of the New Covenant would be to advocate an exact compliance with the ordinances with a view to that being all that God requires.
  - 6) It is not an exact understanding of the literal sense which is wrong; it is the assumption that a literal observance of these moral principles and forms will make a man righteous before God.
- G. Likewise, a ministry of the letter of the New Covenant is one which, in some way, considers a literal compliance with the moral principles and forms of the New Covenant will make a man acceptable with God.
- 1) It is as though one said that by being baptized, coming into the church, taking the Lord's Supper every Sunday, giving money to the church, attending and perpetuating her outward services, is the meaning of being a Christian.

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- 2) It is much more than that. It is more than these things plus a good moral life. None of these things provide a spiritual sensibility or spiritual power.
- H. Ministering the spirit, as taught in 2 Corinthians 3:6, is not a manipulating of people's thoughts and emotions so as to create an outward ecstasy, as though such were spiritual, or as though we could maneuver the Holy Spirit into stirring people. We do not have such power over the Holy Spirit. "Spirit" means "the spirit of the New Covenant."
- I. Just what is the "spirit of the New Covenant"? (I am saying "covenant" instead of "testament" for it is the more accurate sense.
- 1) We are not speaking of a will, or last will and testament; we are speaking of the covenant which Jeremiah foretold (Jeremiah 31 and 32) and which Jesus spoke of (Matthew 26:28 ; Mark 14:24 ; 1 Corinthians 11:25 ; Hebrews 8:8, 13 ; Hebrews 9:15 ; Hebrews 12:24).
  - 2) Its terms should help us to get some idea of the "spirit" (that is, its nature and the atmosphere or disposition which it creates in its adherents.)
  - 3) Jeremiah said it would be far different from the law which presented its demands on tables of stone.
  - 4) God would put His laws in man's inward parts and write them on his heart (Jeremiah 31:32, 33). They would not be so easily forgotten or ignored that way.
- J. Further, by it they should become God's people and He should be their God.
- 1) This suggests a relationship of *intimacy and understanding* — far different from the fear engendered by the law.
  - 2) Further, this intimacy would bring men to a knowledge of the Lord which overcame the need for con-

stant outward reminders from others (as the prophets) in the way of teaching (Jeremiah 31:34). Great and small alike would know Him.

- K. Further, God would not simply pronounce them guilty, but He would forgive their iniquity and would not remember their sins any more (vs. 34). How blessed!
- L. Paul (Hebrews 8:8-13) emphasizes this as he indicates the New Covenant is *now in force* for those who have “fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us” (Hebrews 6:18).
- M. Again, he (Hebrews 9:15) indicates that the benefits of this covenant are made effective through the death of the Christ.
  - 1) In subsequent verses Paul again shows that the benefits have already been made available by faith.
  - 2) He repeats some of the terms of this covenant in Hebrews 10:16-18.
  - 3) The context there shows that the efficacy of this provision is ours through Christ, that it is permanent, that it gives hope, that it sets men free from bondage, and allows a real spirit of liberty.
  - 4) Instead of a spirit of fear it grants a spirit of faith, of hope, of peace, etc. Such is the spirit of the New Covenant and this is what we administer.
  - 5) We do so by living in such a disposition as makes the Christ our Head and radiates our peace with Him and to all those who would come into such a fellowship.
- N. It is called a “spirit of faith” because it is characterized by faith.
  - 1) It genders faith, for faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:13).
  - 2) So we see a “spirit of faith” brought into being in

our hearts through the marvelous provisions of the New Covenant and because these promises are so thrilling and do such marvelous things for the heart, the individual is encouraged to speak about them.

- 3) We believe, so we speak (2 Corinthians 4:14). The world may consider this fanaticism, but it is not; it is a spirit of faith, the spirit of love, the spirit of a sound mind, the spirit of Christ.
- O. There may come those, even some believers, who have "another spirit" (2 Corinthians 11:4).
- 1) "Another spirit" meaning another than that we have been describing (different, see the Greek heteroV (heteros)).
  - 2) It may be a spirit of exclusivism, of debate, of pride, of carnal zeal, of denominationalism or non-denominationalism, etc.
  - 3) All these rule out the spirit of Christ and should be recognized as destructive of spirituality.
  - 4) The sooner we do recognize such wrong spirit the better for us and for the church. Otherwise, we may be caught up in one of these "other" spirits and waste our time and our lives.
  - 5) It may be any sort of extreme which does not adhere to the pattern set forth in the Word.
- P. Brethren may be recognized if they walk in the same spirit (2 Corinthians 12:18).
- 1) We are not talking about the Holy Spirit, though each may be led or directed by Him.
  - 2) But we speak of that spirit of Christ which ought to characterize the brethren in any land, in any age, of whatever previous background or condition.
- Q. Some of the brethren known and loved by this writer are in harmony with my thinking that "spirit" refers to the disposition which is produced in a humble believer.

- 1) We are thankful for these few, but there has not come into my hand any extensive writings on the subject.
- 2) My search of the Scriptures, using a concordance, turns up far more references which I believe have this sense than I had any idea I would find.
- 3) I would not be dogmatic about these references, nor all of those above, but I implore the Bible student to give serious consideration to all of these cited.
- 4) A few more claim our attention, though one or more of these may have been mentioned in passing before.

R. "Walked we not in the same spirit" (2 Corinthians 12:18).

- 1) Paul had sent Titus and another brother to Corinth to remind them of the offering they had promised to the poor saints (2 Corinthians 9:3-5) but had been slow to produce.
- 2) The reaction at Corinth seems to have been resentment towards Paul (2 Corinthians 11:7-10), and they implied that he was deceptive in not asking for money while there, although really wanted it, hence had sent someone else to get it for him.
- 3) Their own "spirit" being certainly wrong and covetous, they accused Paul of the same "spirit." But Paul points out that he and Titus and the other brother all walked in the same spirit. He then reinforces this thought by saying they all walked in the same steps (2 Corinthians 12:18).
- 4) Their attitude and their practices were the same. If they blamed Paul they would find themselves actually blaming the others also.
- 5) The problem was not a question of difference of doctrine, or of affiliation. The problem was a wrong

spirit on the part of the Corinthians. Is there any wonder that he referred to them as "carnal"?

- S. No one questions that "spirit of meekness" (in Galatians 6:1) refers to their attitude, or disposition, required for dealing with a brother caught in a fault.
- 1) This "spirit of meekness" is certainly an element in "the spirit of Christ," and has no reference to the Person of Christ or of the Holy Spirit except, of course, that such a meek spirit will only exist through the grace of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.
  - 2) Similarly, "the spirit of wisdom and revelation" -- for which Paul prayed the Ephesians might have (Ephesians 1:17) -- is not the Holy Spirit, but a disposition of trust in which the Ephesians would come to understand their need for God's enlightenment and would look to Him to supply such.
- T. If we are "well taught" in seminary or somewhere else we may get the feeling that we already know what to do and how to do it.
- 1) This is often seen among God's people. Paul could have written down what he wanted them to know if that were all there is to it, but his writing would not have brought them to have wisdom or receive the revelation.
  - 2) They needed a "spirit of wisdom and revelation." Such will deliver us from a spirit of deceit, of pride, of self-confidence, and particularly from a "spirit of ignorance."
- U. We must, in each church, "endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).
- 1) Peace is a sort of bond which holds a people together as one, provided there is a spirit of unity.
  - 2) The translators of the Authorized Version capitalized the word Spirit in this text.

- 3) Probably "Spirit" in verse 4 should be capitalized. But I feel that in verse 3 it is in error.
- 4) It seems that the "spirit of Christ," of which a "spirit of unity" is one element, is the object of the endeavor called for by the Apostle.
- 5) This ties with "spirit of liberty" (not mentioned) by inference in the mention of a "bond of peace," that is, "a spirit of peace" which binds humble hearts in a church as one.

## **IX. THE SPIRIT'S PRESENCE REQUIRED**

- A. In our endeavor to differentiate between "the spirit of Christ" and the Person of the Holy Spirit we may have led someone to think we are suggesting that the two are not related. One is not the other, true! But the one is impossible without the other. That is, only by the Holy Spirit can one come to have the "spirit of Christ."
- B. If it is possible to understand this distinction it should be no problem to understand the many references which seem to suggest that not all men have the spirit, that a man may fail to continue having the spirit (may lose the spirit or have it withdrawn), may fail to abide in Christ, and must constantly be admonished to abide in Him. These are not simple or easy matters for explanation, but they will seem simple and reasonable enough to one who has surrendered himself to the Lord, a primary condition for having the spirit of Christ.
- C. Though the word "Holy" is not used in Galatians 3:2 it is usually assumed that the Holy Spirit is meant.
  - 1) The definite article is used in verse 2, but not in verse three.
  - 2) Comparing this verse with Galatians 4:6 it appears that the sonship spirit is meant, that is, "the spirit of Christ," the same as in Romans 8:15.
  - 3) This should not be thought of as the Person of the Holy Spirit, but "the spirit of Christ." Galatians 3:2,



3, 5, then, teaches us that the spirit of Christ is not received through putting the flesh to rigor to obey the law or any set of commandments or ordinances, but comes through the hearing of faith.

- D. Simple honesty requires us to look at the word "ministereth" (verse 5).
- 1) It is an exact parallel form to "worketh" miracles.
  - 2) Both describe a present operation, as each is a participle in the present tense.
  - 3) The word for minister means "to supply," literally, "to furnish besides," and is rendered "supplieth" in Ephesians 4:16 (twice), and "supply" in Philippians 1:19.
  - 4) It is "add" in 2 Peter 1:5, and some form of "minister" in its other three usages (2 Corinthians 9:10 ; Galatians 3:5 ; Colossians 2:19).
  - 5) The point is that the supplying is something maintained or going on. It is being supplied to those who hear in faith.
  - 6) It is not something we may assume is done at one point in time and never needs to receive any further attention.
- E. The "promise of the spirit" (Galatians 3:14), again, is not a reference to the giving of the Person, but it is a "Genitive of the Agent" as we learn from the original language.
- 1) The meaning is that the Holy Spirit, according to His promise (far back in Genesis) might come on the Gentiles.
  - 2) It was a promise of the blessing of life which came on Abraham by faith. The same promise is to Gentiles.
  - 3) This is embraced in "the spirit of Christ" as being a portion of that which men may have by faith. Even

the Gentile Galatians could claim this promise through faith (Galatians 4:6).

- F. In Galatians 5:5 we have another example where a capital is used.
- 1) It does not appear, however, to refer to the Person. It is in or by this spirit (of Christ) that men wait for the hope of righteousness.
  - 2) Likewise, it is said in Romans 5:5 that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts and is the occasion of finding hope.
  - 3) This shedding or giving of love is certainly by the Holy Spirit, but the word spirit (Greek, pneuma) is not the Holy Spirit, but that which He gives.
  - 4) Both context and the logic of the language show us this, as there is no article. (I should say that the use or absence of the article does not positively identify the reference as being to the Person of the Holy Spirit, but the logic of the language will show it.)
  - 5) Jesus told us that the Spirit should not speak of Himself (from Himself), but would receive of the things which pertained to the Christ and would show them to us. This is why far fewer of the references are to the Person than the use of Capitals might suggest.
- G. "Walk by the spirit" (Galatians 5:16) is a manner of telling us to walk spiritually, that is, to walk in a spirit which reflects our Master, Christ.
- 1) Such a walk is doubtless made possible by the Holy Spirit. This He enables us to do by supplying us with the gifts (grace, love, faith, peace, patience, etc.) which will enable us to do it.
  - 2) "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye

would.” (Galatians 5:17)

- H. Are we being told that the flesh is lusting against the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is lusting against the flesh? I think not.
- 1) “The spirit,” here, as in Romans 8:4ff, is a reference to that which we have from God by faith and which is constantly supplied in us through the hearing of faith.
  - 2) Because it is the spirit of Christ (verse 9) it is equivalent to the nature of Christ and is, therefore, a nature which we have from God. It is a bestowed nature.
  - 3) It must be cultivated through the “hearing of faith” or else it will not be evident in us.
- I. The construction of the language does not allow me to consider this to be a reference to the Person of the Holy Spirit, though of course God’s nature is ours by the working of the Spirit. I feel that the error in many people’s thinking lies in their assumption that one operation, called ‘a new birth,’ brings this about, whereas it is conditionally bestowed through the hearing of faith and according to many precious promises in which we must live and which must be supplied in us (2 Peter 1:3-10).
- J. Be sure to keep verse 4 in harmony with verse 9, remembering that the man who lacked had also been purged from his old sins. Be sure to read this whole context together if you would grasp this progressive work. Salvation is a continuing operation of God.

## **X. IMPELLED BY SPIRIT**

- A. There is a controversy which has raged for many years regarding which manuscripts of the New Testament are most authoritative. For some years during my earlier ministry the whole emphasis was on certain manuscripts, as the *Sinaitic*, the *Vaticanus*, or the *Alexandrinus*. These first two were supposedly much earlier and, supposedly, much better. But more recent discov-

eries and later scholarship is not so enamored of these so-called earlier manuscripts. Today there is a turning to the *Textus Receptus* (or Received Text), with a few following what they are calling a *Majority Text*. All of this is very confusing to non-Greek students.

B. The Authorized Version, commonly called the King James Version was largely produced with the authority of the *Textus Receptus*.

- 1) It is proving to be the best authority as far as its source is concerned, though its renderings were influenced by their Anglican background.
- 2) In their translating they took certain liberties with the language, as do most translators.
- 3) They added words in italics when they felt it would help the sense or make it clearer. This does not mean that they were trying to change the sense.
- 4) Then they did certain other things which reflected their own bias.
- 5) For example, they did not translate words which might seem to threaten the doctrine of the Church of England.
- 6) Thus the word "baptize," which is not an English word, came into existence in English.
- 7) They did not want to insert 'dip,' or 'immerse' there, for the Church of England did not practice those things, so they just **transliterated** the letters, spelling the Greek letters across into English letters. There was no translation at all!

C. In our present study we meet another problem: they capitalized words which they felt applied to Deity, as Father, Son, Spirit, etc.

- 1) Not until later did printers, or publishers, presume to add — even to the King James Version — a definite article when they thought it would emphasize their understanding. We have an example of this in

Galatians 5:18: "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law."

- 2) In the first place, the *Textus Receptus* which the Authorized Version translators were using, does not have the article.
  - 3) I learn from scholars who have access to early editions of the A. V. that the word "spirit" was printed with a small "a."
  - 4) The same is true of "spirit" in Galatians 5:5 (no article), in Galatians 5:16, and many others.
  - 5) What this means is that there is less evidence that the Person of the Spirit is meant and more evidence that spirit refers to another factor in the life of those with this blessing.
- D. Without taking a dogmatic stand on this aspect of the subject I am suggesting that the disposition of a Christian, one with "the spirit of Christ," wields a strong influence upon his choices, his actions, and his life as a whole. It affects his "walk," his "motives" (leading), his "fruit," and all of his life.
- E. When it says "led of the Spirit" (capital S), we naturally conclude it is referring to the Holy Spirit Who is leading. But there is no definite article and there was no capitalization in the original language. The word "lead" does not require that it be a person.
- F. We are taught that the "goodness" of God leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). Goodness is not a person, but there is a Person behind that goodness. We may not be mindful of the Person, at first, but the goodness influences us to' repent.
- G. Dumb idols, or those who espouse them, led many away (1 Corinthians 12:2).
- 1) This leading seems to be by the impelling influence of their culture and their peers, not necessarily a person; though, likewise, some are led away of di-

vers lusts (2 Timothy 3:6).

- 2) No person here, but simply the pressure of carnal desires. All these passages use the word for 'lead' and illustrate how one may be impelled by forces other than a person, yet behind such forces there are or may be a person or persons.
  - 3) If one is led of the spirit he is not under the law. Also, he is a son of God (Romans 8:14).
  - 4) The whole tenor of the instruction in Romans 8 indicates that the spirit we are to walk after and "mind" -- the spirit in which we are to dwell and abide -- is the spirit of sonship (adoption) in contradistinction to the spirit of bondage or of fear.
- H. Others will follow their own minds and inclinations on this distinction, but I am saying that the language requires us to recognize a "spirit" created in the saint, ministered to him (Galatians 3:5), which is a product of grace (through faith) and not the Person Himself.
- 1) This is not to say that the Holy Spirit is not personally present in the church, or that Christ Himself does not, through the Spirit, administer in the church and direct the lives of the saints.
  - 2) What I would have us see is that there is a **holy disposition** created in us by the Spirit, ministered by our Lord, which leads us, sustains us, and makes us a sweet savor of Christ.
  - 3) This is the spirit that must be present for us to be called the sons of God.
  - 4) This is the spirit that must be present if we are to belong to Christ. If one does not have this spirit He is not Christ's.
- I. This last word does not mean to say that one has not been regenerated, or that he will perish in hell.
- 1) It means that without this sweet spirit which He ministers to the saints one is not in covenant rela-

- tionship and cannot reign with Christ in the kingdom.
- 2) Without it a man does not reflect the Divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). It is through the knowledge of God that we receive grace and peace (2 Peter 1:2).
  - 3) It is by divine power that all things pertaining to life and godliness are supplied to us.
  - 4) This divine power is the word, spoken from God's view, describing what is a sweet spirit from our side.
  - 5) God "causeth us to triumph" and "maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge" (2 Corinthians 2:14).
  - 6) Without this no man is sufficient, not even if he has been born again (2 Corinthians 2:16 ; 2 Corinthians 3:5).
  - 7) He must "make (us) able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:6).
  - 8) This is a "ministration of the spirit" (vs. 8).
  - 9) Who or what is this "spirit"? We are not told until we come to verse 17.
  - 10) "The Lord is that spirit." It would not do well to say, "The Spirit is that spirit," so therefore it is not the Holy Spirit, but rather "the spirit of Christ."
  - 11) In verse 18 the words are in apposition: "by the Lord, the spirit."
- J. I am struggling with beautiful Truth here and I pray God may allow me to present this Truth acceptably to Him. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, would take the things which were His and would show them to us (John 16:13, 14).
- K. The resurrected body of the Christ is at the Father's right hand in heaven, but the Christ tells us that he would not leave us orphans (as a church) but would

come to us (John 14:17, 18).

- 1) His presence is experienced — felt, if you please — as the Holy Spirit shows us just what He is like and ministers His own “knowledge” to us.
- 2) This gives us “the savor of Christ” and affords us the leadership, the power, the influence that we need to be witnesses.
- 3) It is His presence in the same sense of Paul’s presence when he wrote the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 5:3, 4).
- 4) This “knowledge” is afforded us and we are told that “all things pertaining to life and godliness” have been given us, but we must receive them.
- 5) They come “by the hearing of faith” (Galatians 3:2).
- 6) How important is it then that we hear! Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.
- 7) If men are not willing to hear there is no assurance that they will ever know the power, the assurance, the sweetness of this spirit of Christ.

## **XI. “AND MY SPIRIT”**

- A. Is it possible to be “absent in body, but present in spirit”? (1 Corinthians 5:3).
  - 1) The Apostle Paul uses this expression, so we must understand what he is saying.
  - 2) We may be sure he was not saying that his human spirit was going back to Corinth to be present with them while his body was at Ephesus where he wrote this letter.
  - 3) By his “presence in spirit” he was judging the situation at Corinth, which grieved him and concerning which he must give instructions.
- B. A member of the church had been guilty of fornication.
  - 1) It seems that his father had likely married a young-



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er woman and the son had become involved with this woman, though the details are not given us.

- 2) Paul says that it was a more serious offence than would normally be expected even among the Gentiles.
- 3) The church was in a seriously divided condition, reflecting a carnal situation (1 Corinthians 3:3).
- 4) Instead of mourning over this sad state of affairs they were actually "puffed up" (inflated, haughty).
- 5) As Paul writes instructions, he explains that they should have been grieved and should have purged out of their membership this sinner so that his sin, like leaven, should not spread to others in the body.

C. How could Paul be present while absent in the body?

- 1) He had labored at Corinth for two years and more. He knew the mind and disposition of the members quite well, and they knew him similarly.
- 2) He knew the "spirit" of the people and they also knew his "spirit."
- 3) By such language we are speaking in terms which we often use today. When we live with or associate with one for a long time we learn the disposition of the person and are able to "understand" them, as we say, even in matters which may not be up front at the moment.
- 4) Then in absences we can, in mind and heart (imagination) go back and re-live experiences with them or anticipate new experiences.
- 5) The standards of the other come through into our lives, even at a distance. So it may be truthfully said that our Christian parents, though dead and gone, still wield an influence over our lives.
- 6) The spirit of dear old Dad (or Mom) still lives in me. Thus could Paul "judge" the situation at Corinth. In

this light he could give them instruction.

- D. "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:4, 5)
- E. In the space of three verses we have the word "spirit" used three times reflecting disposition, attitude, or state of heart, and illustrating how such disposition can and does wield an influence, even at a distance.
- F. The spirit of Paul was certainly the same as should characterize any good Christian. His presence among them, teaching, admonishing, weeping, sacrificing, working and praying, had created in their consciences a picture of this man. They might not always like it, but they could not ignore it. Now he has challenged them to assemble — "and' just remember that I am there in your midst, and you know what I think of such things" — and purge out this sin.
- G. Our sway over others is thus much stronger than argument or mere words. So it ought to be with God's children, and can be. Then he vindicates the kind of instruction he gives when he says, "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (vs. 5). What "spirit" is to be saved? It is not the Holy Spirit, for there is no sense in which He is lost. It is something requiring "the power of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- H. These words describe that which produces "the spirit of Christ" and with which Paul identifies when he says, "and my spirit."
  - 1) It is the only way a church should perform church discipline. It is not just a matter of carrying out orders according to the letter.
  - 2) It involves a proper attitude, a sweet spirit, a gentle spirit, a loving spirit, yet an obedient spirit.
  - 3) These elements are essential in our actions if what

we do is to honor the Lord and if He is to bless our actions.

- 4) The essential result of such an action is "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." I take this to refer to the fact that the disposition which is essential to our pleasing him, even to our being raised in the first resurrection, as it was evident in Christ's resurrection, must be present at that day when He returns in glory.
  - 5) It is called "the spirit of holiness" in Romans 1:4. This is not the Holy Spirit (the Person), but that which was supplied in Jesus as an element of the fullness of Godhood, and which ought to be present in us.
- I. Let me say again, if your thinking is not in harmony with this line of thought, please do not let it disturb you until you have studied and prayed about it. By no means would I be thought to subtract anything from the Spirit's power or presence. Whatever "spirit" means to you we are sure it is wrought by the Holy Spirit. What we would do is bring some people to see a distinction between the Person and His gifts.
  - J. We do not believe that the Holy Spirit consents to dwell in those who are living in rebellion. The disposition which is wrought in the submitted believer is ministered to us as a part of the work of Christ -- the saving life of Christ. This is a continuing service or ministry if we may judge by the tense of the verb "ministereth" (Galatians 3:5).
  - K. Furthermore, it is an obligation of the believer to continue to manifest the spirit or attitude of submission. He must "walk after the spirit" (Romans 8:4, 5). If he fails to do so he is not spiritual, but carnal, as Paul described the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 3:3).
  - L. It seems to be erroneous in saying that if a man begins to practice sin that this is proof he never has trusted Christ. How long does he have to practice it to prove he

was never born again? But only as he walks after the spirit — walks in righteousness as a matter of habit — is the “divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4) evident in him. It is evident in his supplying in his faith the other elements of Christian growth: virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, love (2 Peter 1:5-7).

- M. These elements are hardly seen in many who profess to believe. We do not say they never trusted Christ as Savior, but they certainly do not add to their faith. They do not show spirituality or the divine nature. The “sweet savor of Christ” is lacking. Why? The “spirit of Christ” is not being ministered to them because they are not minding the things of the spirit, there is not the “hearing (present tense) of faith,” and they may “have forgotten that they were purged from their old sins” (2 Peter 1:9).
- N. It seems to me that we who are teachers have not served the brethren well if we have neglected to teach them the importance of this continual submission, this “abiding” in Christ. If the fruit is lacking there must be the purging of the branches. If there is still no fruit the branch is taken away (John 15:2). That branch which abides will not be taken away and the fiery judgment is not a threat (cf. vs. 3-6). Further, receiving of answers to one’s prayers can be expected (vs. 7). Much fruit will be borne for the glory of God (John 15:8).
- O. So how does one abide in Him?
  - 1) By keeping His commandments (vs. 9). Jesus is the example.
  - 2) These things He said He taught that our joy might be full (vs. 11).
  - 3) So shall we be His friends (vs. 14).
  - 4) It will not do to relegate all of this passage to lost sinners. It is not speaking of men who never believed, but to those “branches” which were in the Vine (Christ).

- 5) So what about their being "cast forth as a branch"? (vs. 6).
  - 6) Evidently this "fire" speaks of chastisement and of separation from Christ in some sense. What sense?
  - 7) It seems to me this applies to losing our covenant position with Christ, so that there is no more a relationship as of bride to Groom. There will be no ruling with Christ.
- P. This accords with the several parables which speak of unfaithful or unprofitable servants who were cast into outer darkness and not allowed to partake with the others in the marriage feast or in the blessedness of the kingdom. No, it is not a pleasant thought, but things are not true because we like them or are wishing it were so, but because God has said them. Better to learn now than to stand before the Lord and hear Him say, "I know you not," or "I never knew you," as will be the case with some. Again, let us not apply such passages to lost sinners, or to Israel, just because we wish it could not apply to us. Simple honesty with God's Word requires that we not handle it deceitfully, that we not "wrest" it or pervert it.
- Q. If someone, somewhat Calvinistically inclined, is disposed to say that this teaches "works for salvation" I would challenge him to explain what "work out your own salvation" means (Philippians 2:12). We work the works of God Who works in us, and this is done by believing Him (John 6:29).
- R. But it should not be forgotten that we are to "labor for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life" (John 6:27).
- 1) This laboring or "working out" refers to our fully working or finishing what God has for us to do.
  - 2) It has no reference to our putting the flesh to rigor to obey so we can be accepted with God.
  - 3) It means that we must walk in faith (the hearing of

faith), we must walk after the spirit, mind the things of the spirit, reckon the old man dead both for good and for evil, and put on Christ.

- S. Surely simple honesty with God's Word requires that we heed the many, many passages which are written in this vein.
  - 1) This will be a sowing to the spirit (Galatians 6:18).
  - 2) Numerous figures are used to describe this disposition of obedience and submission.
  - 3) It is not the same as doing works of righteousness of our own selves ("not by works of righteousness which we have done").
  - 4) However, the fact that it is not by our flesh-works does not exclude faith, works, or works of faith. May we not hide behind this subterfuge.

## **XII. "STAND FAST IN ONE SPIRIT"**

- A. There is only one Holy Spirit. An emphasis on "one spirit" would not refer to the Person at all. The capitalizing of the first letter should not be used here, so it was not used. (There were no small or capital letters in the original language anywhere).
- B. Most would understand that this passage (Philippians 1:27) applies to a spirit of unity and harmony, further described by "one mind. The spirit referred to is the same as in verse 19: "the spirit of Jesus Christ."
- C. Again, the capital is misleading. Its being spoken of something which would be supplied makes it evident that it does not refer to the Person, certainly not if He were supplied once when one was born again.
- D. Then the admonition to "stand fast in one spirit" suggests that it is possible for this disposition to become weak or even lost, so that brethren might be divided and no longer "striving together" for the common faith, "the faith of the gospel."

- 1) How true! And how sad, that believers become carnal, divided, covetous, contentious, and many other fleshly things.
  - 2) What is lacking? It is "the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:19), without which one is no longer Christ's (Romans 8:9).
  - 3) No longer Christ's? Then is he lost again, an alien sinner? No, but there are a number of passages which use this word "lost" with reference to "sheep."
  - 4) We can easily see it of Israel, but we have usually escaped the force of the word "lost" by presuming that they had not been born again, or that the passage applies to the Jews and not to us.
- E. Several instructions to believers or disciples about saving their lives (Greek, psu-chay souls) includes this word "lose" or "lost": Matthew 10:39 ; Matthew 16:25).
- 1) Note especially Matthew 18:14 where "little ones" are "little ones which believe (vs. 6).
  - 2) It is not the Father's will that any of these be lost, but they may become so under certain conditions since He speaks of their going astray or being deceived (Mark 8:35 ; Luke 17:35 ; John 12:25 ; 1 Corinthians 8:11).
  - 3) Instead of the word 'lost' sometimes the word is "perish" is used.
  - 4) When it is said that "none shall perish," it is the same word, but the reference is obviously to those who are walking in submission, heeding, following the "hearing of faith."
  - 5) Just remember, we are not speaking of the possibility of being lost in hell, for that is not possible. But we speak of losing our lives, our usefulness, our reward, our place in the kingdom, our covenant relationship with Christ. Such will not reign with Christ.

- F. How important then that we “stand fast in one spirit.” All those uses of the admonition to “abide in Him,” “continue in (his) love,” and several other words describing perseverance (note that I did not say “preservation”), come in for consideration at this point.

### **XIII. GOD DESIRES A PECULIAR PEOPLE**

- A. Man’s inherently selfish thinking causes him to believe that the most important thing in the world is for one to trust Jesus to save him. And, of course, without this step, the ultimate goal cannot be reached. God’s real purpose is to have a special people. This was indicated in the requirements for the nation of Israel, where the word “peculiar” is used frequently; though not always rendered the same way (Exodus 19:5 ; Deuteronomy 7:6, 14, 26 ; Psalm 135:4 ; Malachi 3:17). This last reference is rendered “jewels.”
- B. God has a goal for man beyond redeeming him from the Fall. That goal has been in God’s purpose since before the Fall. Men seem inclined to think that the whole purpose of God, the Bible, and even of the death of Christ is to redeem man from the Fall. What he does not seem to see is that man’s partaking of this redemption is a kind of process. Salvation is a process. It is complete in Christ and can be had no other way than through Him. It is availed of by faith and no other way. But the error is in thinking that one act of faith finishes the process.
- C. Perhaps we should qualify this language. It is not just redemption which comprises the process. The process had begun in Eden *before* the Fall, when redemption was not a necessary element of it. Adam was on a sort of *probation*. He had been created without any fault, as God’s works are always faultless, but he needed to learn and to prove himself.
- D. The reason for the probation (proving) lies in the fact that he was created with freedom of choice, or what we call “free moral agency.” He could choose evil or good. The probation, however, turned against his making the



right choices. All of his environment, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, were conducive to his making right choices. The wrong choice at that point brought about the Fall with all of its calamitous consequences.

- E. Redemption put man back into a position where he could make choices that were good and develop in ways which God purposed for him, so that he could become a ruler of merit and God would be glorified.
- F. Thus Adam was assigned the responsibility of ruling, beginning in lesser areas: over the fowls, fish, beasts, and creeping things. His dressing and guarding the garden afforded him further opportunity to prove himself. As children should be born, there would become opportunities for more advanced "ruling" for him and for Eve as they steered these young lives into the honoring of God as they themselves were supposed to honor Him.
- G. As further complexities of life arose, particularly with the increase of men, cities and nations upon the earth, there arose a much more demanding rulership by mankind. Man must learn how to exercise authority as a ruler, all the while subservient to God, so that His will is uppermost and man is in submission. It is in bringing about this maturity, this education in rulership, this development in the knowledge of God, that man attains that position which God desires him to reach.
- H. This is the "peculiar people" which God seeks. With freedom of choice it is man's tendency to do things to please himself.
  - 1) His own sensibilities are thus served to his own satisfaction. But God would make man different — strange? — in that He would have him will to do God's will, as the Christ did, and not to please himself.
  - 2) In this man will find his greatest joy, but only if he has come to a proper knowledge of God which enables him to know the sweetness of such knowledge

- the savor of the knowledge of Christ.
- 3) This is God's goal in giving us the probation period following our redemption.
- 4) It is our goal in this book that men may come to know the spirit of Christ and savor the sweetness of it.

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## Chapter Three

# The Habitation Of God

### Introduction

We have strived to distinguish between "the spirit of Christ" and the Person of the Holy Spirit. That disposition which was Christ's is not possible apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. On this we firmly insist. At the same time we would distinguish a particular dwelling place or habitation of the Person — that Third Person of the Godhead. We believe the New Testament makes a clear distinction between the habitation of the Spirit on earth and the spirit of Christ or disposition of the spiritual believer.

Before the coming of the promised Spirit, the Holy Spirit was in the world and did His works, both upon men and in their lives. More often than not it is said that the Spirit came upon or on a prophet or a person.

Where reference is made to the spirit of God in the Old Testament the context often explains that it applies to the characteristics which belong to God, rather than the Person of God dwelling in the man. For example, Exodus 31:3 says that God filled Bezaleel with the spirit of God (small s), in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in workmanship (skill, cunning). In this case it was *power* or *ability* bestowed on such a one. Such examples could be multiplied. Careful examination of each passage will show that the expressions "spirit of God" or "from God" is a reference to an enabling, a power or ability from God, and does not necessarily apply to the Person (though our version often uses a capital letter 'S,') of the Spirit.

It was not until Jesus was glorified that the Person came to dwell in His people (John 7:39); and this was His church. The church is called "a habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22). Even here the reference may be to that characterization of spirituality which properly describes a church of Christ, rather than the place where the Holy Spirit dwells. We believe that on Pentecost God fulfilled a promise to

dwell among His people in a peculiar and new way; His people being a New Testament church. Jesus said the Comforter would dwell *in* them (John 14:17) and not merely *with* them, though it is true that He *is* with them (John 14:16).

Mindful that the church is a local congregation we understand that He came to that body on Pentecost for the purpose of empowering her and enabling her to carry out the Great Commission throughout this age. Believers who are not a part of such church likely enjoy only the same benefit afforded Old Testament saints, who, indeed, had the spirit of God at times. As "the spirit of Truth" the gift belongs solely to the church. Even there we find many who lack "the spirit of Christ" and wrest the Truth to their own hurt.

### **I. MARKS OF A NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH**

- A. Most men are satisfied to identify a scriptural church simply by her doctrines or certain of her practices. Most are willing to settle for a minimum of such doctrines:
- B. Is it Doctrine?
  - 1) **A local congregation** -- not a universal, invisible, or so-called mystical body.
  - 2) **Strict ordinances** -- If a church holds to baptism of believers only by the right authority, in the right manner, and for the right purpose, she has a real plus on her side. If she observes the Lord's Supper as a strictly local church ordinance and observes its limitations in the New Testament, she has another plus. But more, she needs the Shekinah.
  - 3) **The Shekinah** -- For purposes of maintaining the continuity of this article may it be said at this point that while there are individual doctrines which must be present, it is rather the spirit of Christ as manifesting the presence of the Lord which is the most important identifying mark of His church. For further explanation, however, of 'the Shekinah' see **Appendix I** for a discussion of this subject. It is an article from The Reminder for April 1983.

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## II. CHURCH TRAMP

- A. A tramp has no certain home but sleeps, and eats, wherever he finds himself and "the notion strikes him."
- 1) One of the travesties on spirituality in our days is the way membership in a church is bandied about.
  - 2) We believe that God has set every member in the body as it has pleased Him (1 Corinthians 12:18).
  - 3) Thus are we members one of another. Church membership is **not** merely a matter of convenience for the member. It is a relationship designed to aid the other members and glorify the Head of the body.
- B. I do not say that every believer should belong to a church just because it is near to his place of dwelling.
- 1) It may be that he should travel some distance as God may direct so that he can be a blessing and be blessed in a manner which would honor the Lord.
  - 2) Once established there, however, there ought to be some real soul searching before one moves.
  - 3) It is true that circumstances may dictate such a move. A move of residence to a great distance may be one of those circumstances.
  - 4) A laxity in discipline or doctrine might be such a circumstance. A departure from the spirit of Christ could be another.
  - 5) In all of these, however, it should be a matter of remembering that God placed one there for His own purposes and we must ascertain whether He has finished with our labors at that point.
- C. A member may move to another church as God leads, just as a pastor may be called of the Lord to another field.
- 1) It is my feeling that much of pastoral moving is not of the Lord. When sheep learn their shepherd it is a

traumatic experience for them to suddenly find themselves without that shepherd, or being asked to follow another.

- 2) A pastor, of course, is only an under-shepherd, for Christ is the Great Shepherd of the sheep.
  - 3) It seems that far too many actions and positions taken are the result of our following our own feelings, our own judgment, or our own convenience.
  - 4) I am sure this is not the way the Lord originally intended it to be.
- D. How does one determine the Lord's will and leadership in these crucial matters? The Bible is the same wherever one may have his membership, so there must be some other factor(s). Has it not come to a matter of "my will be done" instead of "Thy will be done"? In this distinction lies all of our problems.

### **III. KNOWING GOD'S LEADERSHIP**

- A. When a believer surrenders himself to Christ to be born again he made the only possible move to bring him eternal life. He should have learned in that experience that the same move will provide him with leadership, knowledge, and all other evidences of God's grace. There is no other way to partake of God's grace. In Him are all the riches of the grace of God.
- B. In the very moment of that first surrender in faith one learned that he had been cleansed, forgiven, made alive in Christ, or as we say, he knew he had been saved. How did he find out? Was it not a direct communication from God? "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16). Some are too timid to admit it at once. It is too simple, too easy, and defies all of their powers of logic or reason, so they hesitate. But soon they will be able to confess Him and in the confessing comes strength and further assurance. SO GOD DOES SPEAK DIRECTLY TO THE HUMAN HEART (conscience, soul)!

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- C. Can we believe from this that He then deserts us to follow our own wisdom, our own judgment, likely carnal, in order to know what we should do to honor Him? Are we to look at circumstances arid weigh the factors and make decisions in the light of our own understanding? It seems foolish even to ask.
  - D. Surely every step of the life of faith should be taken under the direct supervision of the Lord. The first public step is that matter of confessing with the mouth (Romans 10:10). He had been regenerated, to be sure, but taking this step further enhances the experience — the salvation experience, giving boldness, assurance, courage. These are elements in the saving of the life. These enhancements are also a part of that disposition which we are calling “the spirit of Christ.” So that spirit (disposition) is wrought in us as we obey the Lord in submission to His direction.
  - E. Soon that confessing believer will realize his need to identify with the Lord’s church, that visible body in which he becomes a member of Christ. Elsewhere in this thesis we will discuss the elements of that union with Him. Any further step he must take must come directly from the Lord. He will impress that move upon the heart as it is needful for him to make it. See (Chapter 8).
  - F. There may come circumstances in the body of his membership which grieve him, things which will call for much prayer, for witnessing, for helping others, for study, for patience. If he looks for a way to run from all these burdens he will miss the opportunity which he has been given to become strong in Christ. In his weakness he may become a burden to some other church, unable to carry the burdens of others (cf. Galatians 6:2).
  - G. Instead of his becoming a solution to a problem he becomes a part of the problem. He made this move to escape responsibility. He used his human judgment and saw things which were not right, so he escapes from them. True, there come times, rarely, when one must leave a church because the majority is set to go their

own way and not follow the Lord or His written Word. Every effort, in prayer, in admonition, and in instruction has been made to turn the situation around, and he cannot. In such rare instances one may have to leave his church and even place his membership far away. Churches do grow cold, get rebellious, and die. Not one of those mentioned in the New Testament are standing today. They died out.

- H. So, does God dwell where you are a member? Can you sense His presence in your own heart? Can you sense the surge of His Spirit when the Word is preached, when the songs are being rendered, when a dear saint is praying? Even if a majority seems only to be going through religious motions, are there a few — two or three — who still touch heaven and who still touch your own life with blessings? Then perhaps you should stay, pray with them, love them, plead with others, love them all, and God may revive that church. Or he may allow the dull, dead element to leave or die out. He is far more patient than we are. Dead or rebellious members should be disciplined (see elsewhere in this thesis). Only so may the spirit of Christ be “saved” in a church. (I use the word “saved” in the sense it is found in 1 Corinthians 5:5.)

#### **IV. THE ELEMENTS OF UNION**

- A. When we understand that belonging to a local church is explained in the Scriptures by the human body we should be able to see why it is not something which can readily be changed. In recent times we have learned to transplant body parts, but it is a tricky piece of business.
- “God has tempered the body together” (1 Corinthians 12:24)
- B. This language is evidence that God did the combining or commingling, and the context tells us that He did this according to the strengths and weaknesses, the comely and uncomely parts. A body needs all of its parts. Those



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less "comely" (not fashioned well) we honor so they become well fashioned. All of this is to the end that there be no schism in the body.

- C. In the human body which Jesus had dwelt the fullness of Godhood (Colossians 1:19) as it pleased the Father. This fullness of Godhood included all of the elements of His glory, that is, every attribute of God. Only to that degree His living in a human body required did any of those attributes suffer any limitation.
- D. Naming all of God's attributes would be beyond my ability or the extent of these pages, but certainly that fullness included God's wisdom, His patience, mercy, love, righteousness, holiness, power, faithfulness, goodness, justice, grace and many others. Lacking as to the physical body was infinitude, but only as to the body, for even that body could walk on water or suddenly disappear from sight and grasp.
- E. In His body the church all of these may dwell but only according as that body is "filled" by Him who "fillet" (Ephesians 1:22, 23). No one of us can manifest all of the attributes, or even many of them, but all together the body can manifest some of the fullness of God. In this making God known the church fulfils her mission as a church.
- F. Members edify one another as they reflect the "savor of His knowledge" (2 Corinthians 2:14) and this "savor" or aroma of Christ, this sweetness, is visible, so that even the stranger or the unlearned or the unbeliever can sense it (1 Corinthians 14:25), so that he can testify that "God is in you of a truth."
- G. May we become body-conscious so that we may care for one another, help one another, protect one another, but particularly that we may fulfill God's purpose for us. Those deceived by the invisible, universal, mystical body heresy are easy targets for the confusion, the divisions, which destroy the unity of the body. Satan uses this to defeat the purpose of the church. They believe their

claims to "one large body" overcomes the weakness of division, but in God's provision the local church, with its discipline, its worship, its mutual help or edification, is the only place where there can be true unity, genuine fellowship, true manifestation of the "savor of His knowledge."

- H. May Missionary Baptists avoid being deceived by this element of Protestantism which leaves to individuals the business of judging his own needs and qualifications. Why? Because the body is out of sight (invisible) and has no way to directly bless him or help him overcome his weaknesses. Only a church can do that.

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## Chapter Four

# THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST

### Introduction

Many elements of this subject are overlapping. Unless we are able to appreciate the meaning of the church's being Christ's body we will miss much of the meaning for the church's existence.

When Jesus came, manifest in a visible body as a man, it was that men might be able to see with understanding something of the nature of God. The law could reveal His righteousness. The creation could show his eternal power and Godhood. Even His holiness, His wisdom, His justice, and other of His attributes were visible there. Many more were not so clear, however. Possibly sincere and honest men could tell that God was fair (righteous) in the manner prescribed for men to get along with other men. His own dealings with men in such might and in summary fashion could be interpreted to mean that he was often not interested. So His patience, elements of His love, His forbearance, His gentleness and kindness, and similar attributes were not so clearly evident from the law.

### **I. THE MEANING OF THE INCARNATION**

- A. Some idea of the incarnation can be seen in the personal touch afforded God in Christ as He dealt with men. There is no room for controversy here, Paul tells us: "Without controversy (that is, confessedly) great is the mystery of godliness..." (1 Timothy 3:16). He then goes on to name some of the elements of this mystery: God was manifest in the flesh, justified (vindicated) in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached to the Gentiles (not just to Jews), believed on in the world, received up into glory. Beautiful condescension which made all this possible.
- B. The view which Satan would have men believe of God is that He is distant, unreasonable, hard to understand, difficult to know, and probably does not care about puny men. But the incarnation repudiates such false conceptions. It gave God the means He needed to show Him-

self in all of the mercy, compassion, love, kindness, goodness, and caring that sinners needed to know. It also gave men an opportunity to get a glimpse of His glory (John 1:14). Possibly this was not realized fully until the Transfiguration scene. It also showed God's justice or righteous wrath in ways which could not have been thought of before, as when He "made a scourge of small cords" and drove the merchandisers out of the temple. Are we to see His justice tempered with compassion in this instance because he made the scourge of small cords. The record is clear, though, that there comes a day when He will not withhold His wrath.

- C. He that has seen me has seen the Father," Jesus said (John 6:36, 46 ; John 14:7, 9). God is not hiding Himself as sinners often would charge. He desires to be known for Whom He is so that men may worship and honor Him as God.

## **II. BODY CONSCIOUSNESS**

- A. All of the visibility which God received in Christ through the incarnation would seem to be gone now. But no, he left His body here. Not the physical, virgin—born, and resurrected body, but His body, the church.
- B. Men saw His fullness in the physical body of Jesus (John 1:16) and experienced it in the receiving of grace on top of grace. Their partaking of His spirit (God's spirit) which meant their partaking of God's nature, enabled men to experience and then to manifest to others some of the elements of His fullness. This partaking, of course, is limited by our receiving, for He is the one who fills (Ephesians 1:22, 23). Men must receive, though, if they are to be filled.
- C. Just what is it with which men are to be filled? We are to partake of the spirit of God (God's spirit, that is, the Divine Nature). This comes about by our supplying within our faith the elements of God's grace as set forth in 2 Peter 1:4-11. The context in this passage suggests that this is something for which we are responsible. God

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does the saving; He supplies the gift or gifts; He does the electing. But it is up to us to "give all diligence" to see that these things are supplied in our lives (vs. 5). In another passage we are told that we receive this spirit by "the hearing of faith" (Galatians 3:5). We are not speaking of the Person of the Holy Spirit, but of the nature or disposition of God.

- D. This disposition was perfectly shown in Christ. Even in Him, however, it was because of "the hearing of faith," and the ministering of God to Him as He regularly and persistently sought Him in prayer. The Man, Christ Jesus, was a man and needed His Father's constant ministrations so that the Man could show forth the fullness of God and perform all His will.
- E. I suspect it is difficult for many to think in this manner concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. We know He was the express image of the Father, the brightness of His glory (Hebrews 1:3). By this ministration to Him He showed the fullness of God, including Divine power. I do not presume to understand all of the elements of this glorious mystery, but it is obvious that God dwelt in Him in all of His fullness, so that He was fully and completely God, yet every whit a man; even to the enduring of temptation while never once yielding to it.
- F. We can say He was very God, for it is true. But He was also very man and in the Human Person there was every need that we have. That Man is the one who died, not God. That Man was raised from the dead. That Man is coming again to rule on earth. God has demonstrated that it is possible for a man to embrace the fullness of God in his nature. Jesus did it. (We are not here dealing with his pre-existence, but with His humanity in which resided the glory of God.
- G. Now to the particular theme at hand. "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). The command was "In the beginning...Let

there be light..." The glory of God in His face is a manner of speaking which tells us that His nature, the Divine Nature, was reflected in the life, the looks, the works, the disposition of Christ. This is the spirit of Christ.

- H. But, just a minute! That same light of the knowledge of the glory of God has shined in our hearts. It is God's gift in response to "the hearing of faith." I dare say that it came in the first moment of one's trusting for salvation. But experience, as well as the Word, clearly teaches us that the fullness did not come then. This is a result of enhancements to our faith as we continue to hear.
- I. The many admonitions to "abide" in Him, to "grow in grace and knowledge," to "put on Christ," and to continue "steadfast," all instruct us to know that this nature of God, this spirit of Christ, will be subdued, pushed aside by the old nature, unless we constantly heed the Word.
- J. The Holy Spirit, the spirit of Truth, is provided for the church so as to take the things of Christ and show them to us (John 16:14). It is His knowledge, that is, the knowledge of Him which enables Him to minister to us His nature. Without going into much textual proof we know that this promise of the Spirit came on the church on that first Pentecost after Christ's Ascension. It was a blessing for the church for this whole age. He came to manifest Christ to us. We were not there to see Him in the physical body, so we need the things of Christ shown to us and the Spirit does this. But He does it in more ways than by merely giving the written Word and granting us discernment of it. He transforms our lives through the application of the gifts of God's fullness. Then others have a reflection of Christ in us.
- K. If we are to attain this position we must be a part of His body, the church, and partake of this ministry.
- L. Unless we are conscious of the body, mindful of its purpose, aware of our relationship to other members of the body and particularly to the Head, we do not attain the measure of the fullness of His nature that is essential to

our usefulness. When we behold as in a mirror it is only a dim reflection (1 Corinthians 13:12). This means the mirror was not a perfect reflection as in the face of Jesus Christ, but the promise that we can see and know as He knows us. I think we are taught by this that the words of the prophets and apostles, at first not complete though now complete, are not as efficient in revealing God's glory (nature, fullness, disposition) as a visible reflection of it. It was there in Jesus, yes, but He is not here now literally, yet His body is here -- and it is our privilege to show in our own lives this Divine nature to all the world!

### **III. HOLDING FAST THE HEAD**

- A. This expression is found in Colossians 1:19. A tendency in the church at Colossae was much like we see today.
- 1) Men are mindful of a need, a duty, and they presume that they can fulfill that duty by applying themselves in a voluntary humility (vs. 18).
  - 2) Thus do men act as though under the law from which Christ set us free. They do their duty, they go to church, they give their support, they go through the motions of worship, prayer, and obedience, but it is all a product of their fleshly mind.
  - 3) It appears to be wise and makes a show, even of humility, but there is no glory for God in it; it only satisfies the flesh (Colossians 2:18-23).
  - 4) It is that childish attitude which Jesus deplored in adults when He was here (Matthew 11:16-19). One group wanted to play one way and another the other way. They had no director to say which game to play or how.
- B. A church is not left to its own fancy in belief or practice. She has a Head, even Christ. Each member of the body is to respond to Him alone. They may minister to each other, but it is all in accord with His direction. Anything else is, "My will be done," and not "Thy will be done."

- C. While Jesus is Head over all, things to the church (that is, on behalf of the church), He is peculiarly Head of the local body, the church (Ephesians 1:22, 23).
- 1) When it is said that He is Head over all things on behalf of the church the meaning is that there are no powers or influences which can gain the victory over the church except as He allows it.
  - 2) Churches do become victims, but it is only when her members become spiritually cold, removed from Him, and not abiding in Him. If even only one ("any man") will open the door and let Him in He will come in and sup with him, that is, he will be the church; the others will be outside.
- D. This allegiance to Christ is essential to a bridal relationship. One cannot reign with Christ by manifesting his own will, though he be very zealous.
- 1) It is only as Christ is the Master, in control of the life. The word "hold" (Colossians 2:19) suggests a tenaciousness; it insists on man's responsibility.
  - 2) We used to sing "Hold to God's Unchanging Hand," but we slacked up because somebody suggested this was teaching salvation by works, that God's unchanging hand hold us and not we holding on to God.
- 1) It is true that God holds us as His children, but if we are to be a part of His Bride we must hold tenaciously to the Christ.
  - 2) It is not done by human strength, nor even by a great measure of faith, but it does mean that we must not depend on anything else than Him to bind us to His body.
- E. The members are bound together by "Joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together" and so increasing every way with the increase of God. The



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growth is strictly from God, but we must adhere closely to him and to the other members of the body. Faith, love and peace seem to be the bands that bind the members together. "Knit together in love" (Colossians 2:2 ; cf. Colossians 3:14).

- F. "Knit together" is a word meaning to force or drive together, suggesting a strong compaction. Our lord furnishes the nourishment and we are common partakers, bringing about a compact, tightly knit union, where love, faith and peace prevail. But this will only apply to those members who hold fast to Him as the supreme authority and power over the body.
- G. I gather from reading the New Testament that such bringing together under His authority is only purposed in Christ where all are to be brought together in one (Ephesians 1:10). As long as men consider that this means that God is going to bring all men to peace, or even all saved men, to peace and love, I feel they are open to deception and disappointment.
- H. The mystery of the church in which He will accomplish this does not allow its application to those outside. There can be no Christian unity outside His body. Oh, yes, there can be more agreement with Christians outside than with unbelievers. But where is the unity when men are not holding the Head, when they play religion, exercise a will worship and a voluntary humility, but are not truly submitted to Him in Truth? It is far more serious than most allow to be found out of fellowship with the Lord's church.
- I. While we are on this subject I think should point out that there is no area of Christendom in which such "knitting together" can be effected other than the local body.
  - 1) We may have fellowship with other churches of like faith and order, since they too recognize His Headship.
  - 2) But even then we cannot presume to perform the

work given to His churches and preserve such love, peace, and faith in extra-church capacities.

- 3) This is why there is so much controversy and debate in general gatherings which presume to do business as churches or as representatives of the churches.
  - 4) No association of any size, neither any convention or conference or fellowship can claim this distinctive ministry from the Head which compacts the body into a unity.
- J. Just in case you lost the train of thought, I remind you that the spirit of Christ is promised to the body, the church, and that His spirit alone preserves the sweet savor of Christ, which is that holy disposition among the saints.

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## Chapter Five

# THE CHURCH AS A WITNESSING INSTITUTION

### Introduction

Just what is it to be a witness? I think most would say that it is a form of telling lost people how to be saved. This is certainly included. Our witness, however, is to the worthiness of our Savior. It is not merely the "letter" of how things happen or why. A witness is one who tells what he knows, not just what he has heard. It is what he has seen, heard, felt, or experienced. This is why the spirit of Christ is such an essential element in our witnessing. Church members are those who are joined to Him and to each other in a special way. He ministers the spirit to them (Galatians 3:5) and they, in turn, minister to each other.

### **I. "IN DIVERS MANNERS"**

- A. God has spoken to men in various ways during the past (Hebrews 1:1, 2)...
  - 1) ...by the law with all of its pictures and symbols...
  - 2) ...and by the prophets with the providences which enforced their words
- B. In these last days, however, He speaks in His Son. This is explained in the next verse (Hebrews 1:3). The Man, Christ Jesus, became the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of His Person, and demonstrated in His life, miracles, death, and resurrection just what the Father is like.
- C. God wants men to know Him. The Man Jesus came to reveal Him. His spirit perfectly reflected Him in all of His fullness (Colossians 1:19 ; Colossians 2:9).
  - 1) This is explained by Paul's statement that "the knowledge of the glory of God" was evident in the face (in the Person) of Jesus Christ.
  - 2) This light of the knowledge of the glory (2 Corinthians 4:6) has shined in our hearts.

- 3) This shining is to enable us to reflect the same glory, the light of His knowledge, to others. It gives us the "savor of His knowledge," or "the knowledge of Him" (2 Corinthians 2:14).
  - 4) This sweetness of Christ becomes health to those who are being saved, but it is death to those who are perishing (2 Corinthians 2:15, 16).
  - 5) This says that it is dangerous to be around a believer who manifests Christ unless one is willing to be changed.
  - 6) True believers are not to be ignored any more than Christ was to be ignored. One either is blessed with His sweetness (the savor of His knowledge) or he is marked with further evidence of the death which his sins produce in him.
- D. The testimony of a church, then, is borne, not merely from the pulpit of a church, but from the members as well. In fact, the message of the pulpit may be almost completely nullified by the coldness in the members. On the other hand, a very poor preacher may be exceedingly blessed with fruits as the whole body causes Christ to be seen. The body becomes "the fullness of him that filleth" (Ephesians 1:23), meaning that the extent of their influence is determined by the degree of their willingness to be filled with the spirit of Christ, the fullness of Godhood.
- E. This spirit is not manifest in a church when there is confusion in the worship services, it is not aided by much speaking or multiplicity of voices being heard.
- 1) The record in 1 Corinthians 14:23 illustrates that the Corinthians did have certain gifts which God had given to edify the body (Ephesians 4:11-16).
  - 2) But they had debased their use because of the pride they felt in possessing such gifts.
  - 3) Thus many spoke at once, or to get attention, and even interfered with those who had such gifts as

specially edified others, as the gift of prophecy (a speaking forth of the words of God).

- 4) Paul said that an unlearned person or an unbeliever coming in would think that such people were insane (mad).
- F. On the other hand, if such an unlearned or unbeliever came in and found orderliness, with one speaking at a time and not more than a reasonable number in one service, with all subjected to the spirit of the prophets (vs. 32), then a different result would be seen. The visitor would find "the secrets of his heart manifest" (vs. 25), that is, he would realize what sin was in his own heart. Then, falling down he would worship God and report that God is in such a place (vs. 25).
- G. It is the presence of God, seen in the spirit of Christ, which convicts men of sin and brings them to see God and their need of Him. This is scriptural witnessing. It may not always be in the assembly, but it ought always to be in the assembly. Sometimes it may be seen in a life at home, or on the street or in the work place. It certainly ought always to be seen in the worship place. It is effective, just as described in John 16:7-11.

## **II. A PEOPLE FOR HIS NAME**

- A. When Peter was explaining to the church at Jerusalem why he went into the home of a Gentile (Cornelius) they were confronted with a violation of their traditions and, possibly, their prejudices. But when the evidence was in, James, presumably the pastor, presented the matter to the church and, among other things, indicated that Peter's going to the Gentiles was right; it was to "take out a people for His name" (Acts 15:14). These are inspired words and they certainly tell us that a part of the business of a church is to take out of the world, even from among Gentiles when that is needful, a people for God's (Christ's) name. Israel had not responded, so the disciples were to turn to Gentiles.
- B. It is not as though God did not care for Gentiles, or that

He did not want Gentiles. In the beginning he had made an appeal to all men to heed Him and to come back to Him after the Fall.

- 1) The covenant with Noah, which was a covenant to all men, indicates this. But they did not seem to want to return, so God turned to a man, living among idolaters, Abraham by name, and made a covenant to take out a special people for Himself.
  - 2) That people evidently would be more inclined to heed than would men in general.
  - 3) But even they failed in time, so God pursued His purpose to raise up a special people wherever He could get them to respond.
  - 4) At first this was largely among Jews, and that is where Jesus went first to make His appeal.
  - 5) "A people for His name" would be a people worthy of that name, a people of whom He would not be ashamed, a people whom He could acknowledge. If they are to attain to His eternal glory they must meet certain qualifications. They can only do this as they, through faith, grow to a spiritual likeness of Him.
  - 6) "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." (2 Timothy 2:11-13)
- C. We must see that it is essential that we die with Him, that is, not live for this world. We must suffer if we would enter into His glory (Romans 8:17). We must go on trusting Him, which is the meaning of "believe."
- 1) In other words, it is to continue faithful, the word used to describe His disposition toward His Father. We must not deny Him.
  - 2) Can those who are born again deny Christ? We hear

Peter doing it in the court of the Jews (Matthew 26:69-75).

- 3) While this may be extreme, there are many other ways in which we deny Him. Unless we, like Peter, readily repent we shall be denied before the Father.
- 4) This does not mean that we lose our salvation, the New Birth, but it means that we cannot be a part of that "people for his name." That is the people who shall reign with Him in the kingdom to come.

### **III. A SEPARATED PEOPLE**

- A. The very words "take out a people" (Acts 15:14) suggest to us that God is separating from the multitudes those who are willing to allow Him to change them. God's appeal at first was to the whole human race. His grace is still available to the whole race, but His efforts to conform a people to His image are made only on those willing to be changed.
- B. The evangelism principle requires that all men everywhere be given the gospel.
- C.
  - 1) But we fail to remember that changing men takes more than a single step.
  - 2) In the moment of their initial repentance and faith they are concerned primarily about their own welfare. They are fearful lest they perish, as they ought, in eternal perdition.
  - 3) Not until that matter is safely passed are men able to give much thought to serving God or honoring Him for His own worthiness.
  - 4) All may be grateful that they are redeemed and the fear of torment is lifted, but it appears that most of us do not long feel this gratitude.
  - 5) We soon turn again to serving our own interests and it is difficult to remember that our life, our posses-

sions, including our loved ones, and all that we have are but evidences of His goodness.

- C. The emphasis on God's love, His faithfulness, and the certainty of His promises often lulls us to complacency. Since we are saved, as we say, and we cannot be lost, for we have been taught the security of the saved, we do not take seriously the overwhelming bulk of the Word of God which calls for surrender of all of our lives, our time, our possessions, and allowing ourselves to become entirely His.
- D. I fear that we have categorized the whole human race into "saved" and "lost" and failed to note that the ones we call "saved" may only have their spirits born again and their lives (souls) are still held as our own, so we overlook that other category: a separated people, a covenant people, a people for His name.
  - 1) It is this category which experience the spirit of Christ.
  - 2) They are the ones who maintain the testimony of God's people in the world. Without them there would be no true churches in the world and no effective testimony.

#### **IV. THE ORDINANCES**

- A. One wonders what most people presume to be the purpose of baptism and the Lord's Supper.
  - 1) One is born again before and without either of these. It seems that they do want to become a member of a local church and baptism is required by all churches, including the false ones, to become a member. Why is this?
  - 2) For the Lord's true churches the reason is the same as when He sent John to "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (John 1:6 ; Isaiah 40:3 ; Malachi 3:1 ; Luke 1:17).
  - 3) Baptism called men to repentance. That was John's



message. And it was not merely an appeal to men to believe for the new birth, but the goal set before them was the promised kingdom.

- 4) To be prepared for that was the goal. Only so were men prepared for the Lord. It was such prepared men who followed the Christ and who became his church.
  - 5) The ordinance of baptism, then, is a distinctive ordinance calling for separation. Those who have been born again need to learn to be separated.
  - 6) Paul explains that it is an entering into the death of Christ and the beginning of a new walk (Romans 6:1-13).
  - 7) It is a putting on of Christ, in symbol, something which must be done by faith repeatedly, though not but once in symbol.
  - 8) The ordinance says that one is dead to the old life and is not to live in sin any longer. He may fail in individual acts of sin but it must never again become the habit of his life, for he is dead to sin. If he truly is dead to sin he will not sin any more than a corpse will commit sin.
  - 9) Further, he is resurrected to live a new kind of life, a new life in spirit. This "spirit" is the spirit of Christ.
- B. The only other church ordinance is the Lord's Supper.
- 1) Neither this nor baptism can, of itself, purge or cleanse sin.
  - 2) Both are symbolic lessons designed to keep us reminded of certain things.
  - 3) The Supper, containing the elements of the fruit of the vine and unleavened bread, has some valuable lessons.
  - 4) The bread is unleavened, reminding us of the sinless body which Jesus offered on the cross.

- 5) The fruit of the vine tells us of the blood which purges our sins. We need to see these things in a proper perspective.
- C. The church is His body today. It is supposed to be without sin. No, we are not perfect, but we have a Savior Who is gracious and the other element is designed to cleanse any sin we may allow in moments of weakness.
- 1) Sin in the body is to be purged lest it cause a schism in the body. It damages the testimony of the body any time it is allowed. Should it continue the spirit of Christ will be destroyed in that body.
  - 2) Each observance of this ordinance is an occasion for soul searching and of repentance as these reminders of our sins and of His cleansing blood are brought before us. God desires that His people "be holy."
  - 3) It costs them only the price of denying the world and acknowledging Him.

## **V. A SPIRITUAL PEOPLE**

- A. It has been frustrating to try to present the narrow view taken in this thesis while talking to preachers, because they either confuse it with the doctrine of salvation by works, or with the other false doctrine, sinless perfection.
- 1) There is an element of truth in both of these misconceptions.
  - 2) I do not believe any man lives above sin, for God's word says he does not (1 John 1:9).
  - 3) But that God would have us abstain from all sin, even the appearance of evil, is also the truth.
  - 4) If His grace is sufficient to enable us to avoid one sin it is sufficient for another, and more.
  - 5) "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" is also a truth (Philippians 2:12).
- B. It does not contradict the statement that we are saved by grace through faith "and that not of your-

selves" (Ephesians 2:8, 9), since there is no merit in men to be delivered from sins or born again. But what God has wrought (worked in) must be worked out through our obedience.

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## Chapter Six

# FINDING A SCRIPTURAL CHURCH

### Introduction

One “unlearned or an unbeliever, coming into an assembly should be able to say “God is in you of a truth” (1 Corinthians 14:23-25). The spirit of Christ should be there. The “unlearned” might not know doctrine, and being an unbeliever he would have little understanding of spiritual things, but this spirit is something which he would sense in his soul because “the secrets of his heart were made manifest” (vs. 25), that is, were made known to his own conscience, so that he was moved to fall down and worship God. This is the mark of a true, New Testament church.

The evidences of this spirit will not be equally felt or known in every assembly of the Lord, because there will be some lack of the spirit in each place. We have spoken of the possible state and we would have you realize that any measure of this spirit is evidence of the moving of the Lord in that place.

It is true that there are substitutes and imitations. Men learn that something is supposed to be felt and things are supposed to happen., so they go about to create emotions or tensions and to make things happen. This is done through various things, depending on the environment, the age, the culture, the standards in the community, and many other factors. Some create an “atmosphere of worship,” as they call it, using beauty of surroundings, lighting, music, form (genuflections and the like), and thus create the illusion of the presence of the Lord. Others, more of a “low church” turn, use gospel songs, or instrumentals, much speaking (amens, hallelujahs, praise the Lord), much noise and various bodily movements and gesticulations, thus stirring people to feel that “they have something.”

### **I. NON-PERFECT IN THE FLESH**

- A. In any assembly some of the things mentioned above may be found and with good reason. Saying “amen” is good when it is a genuine expression of response to what

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is happening (1 Corinthians 14:16). So also would many other expressions be correct in an assembly as long as they were true reflections of what was happening and so long as all things are done decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40).

- B. You should observe that many of the references given are from the context of 1 Corinthians 14. This is for good reason. The very identity of a Scriptural church may hang on these things, inasmuch as they are a reflection of the spirit of Christ, or of the lack of such expression. Paul seems to suggest that these outward things may very well close the door of a church's usefulness.
- C. Tongues, much speaking, general confusion, as well as miracles, healings, prophesyings, and the like, were all found in Corinth and possibly other New Testament churches, but while these things could show, and often did, the power of God in that day, they had already begun to be perverted by some because they were outward, provided a show, and tended to satisfy the flesh.
- D. Churches still may show weaknesses in these areas. Maybe there is not the tendency to go after the gifts, but there is nearly always a tendency to go for show. People like to be noticed or, put more accurately, they want to have a part or be thought useful. Not being very spiritual they tend to discipline the flesh, use their talents, and be heard; All such is legal, not to say carnal. And the sensitivity of the situation is that most any of the very things so done in a carnal spirit may also be done in a right spirit.
- E. Singing, praising God, giving a testimony, stepping forth to, lead, and much, more, are all good and right actions. The rightness or wrongness of such will be determined by each individual through a looking at his own heart to learn his motives in what he is doing.
- F. We will all err in our zeal to honor God and be useful, but as we grow in grace it should become more and more evident to us just what part of what we are doing is of

the flesh and what truly honors Him. Public praying is certainly a right matter under certain conditions and, I feel, that every man ought to be willing to lead a congregation in going to the throne of grace. I recognize, at the same time, that it is possible to usurp the job of others while praying and to let self get in the way. The line is very fine. Better it is to err on the side of too much zeal than too little. It is always possible to do the right thing in a wrong way (cf. David's venture in moving the Ark of God to Jerusalem, 1 Chronicles chapter 15, especially vs. 13).

- G. Even preachers, or maybe I should say, preachers especially, are inclined to enter into their labor in the energy and wisdom of the flesh. They study and prepare, and so they must, but the preparation is often of the head, and the heart is not ready for the task they have. This is a special danger to one who has some latent ability to remember and to speak. Those with musical ability are also prone to err in this same direction. How can one avoid such error? How is it possible to do anything without the flesh entering into it?

## **II. MUST BE DEVOTED TO THE HEAD**

- A. A desire to be spiritual and to be useful will be found in every believer, especially at the first, or when he has first trusted the Lord. From this early beginning it is very easy to get swept up in the errors we have mentioned. It is not, therefore, that we should want to be spiritual, we must heed that other yearning which a new believer will find in his heart: the yearning to honor his Lord.
- B. Christ is the head of the church, the local body. As a member of the body each one of us should be conscious of His direction in our whole lives, especially of that portion we spend in the assembly. "Not holding the Head" becomes the very cause of the promotion of self or of other men.\*

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### **III. THE MARK OF A TRUE CHURCH**

- A. We look for doctrinal soundness when we seek to determine whether a church is the Lord's. But is this enough? Many churches are doctrinally sound but their "spirit" is not Christ-like, that is, they do not have the spirit of Christ. It is possible for an individual or a church to be correct, for the most part, in their doctrines, even to the point of defending them vigorously, but at the same time there is not the sweetness of Christ in their meetings. In their actions there may not be the patience, the love, the kindness, the righteousness, the holiness, which was in the Christ.
- B. Remember, the church is His body. If it is it should show His spirit. He is its Head. If He is allowed this headship by all the members, each of them submitting to Him as is proper, then His spirit will characterize the deportment each of the members and of them all collectively. Without such a spirit they are not the body of Christ, or will not long remain so. He is very gracious, much more than we are, so He may put up with our waywardness for longer than we would with one another. But in time He must "remove the candlestick." In this case they cease to be a church.

### **IV. A LOOK AT THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST**

- A. Seven is the number of spiritual completion, so the Spirit that shall rest upon the Righteous Branch is thus described.
  - 1. "The spirit of the Lord"
  - 2. "The spirit of wisdom"
  - 3. "And understanding"
  - 4. "The spirit of counsel"
  - 5. "And might (power)"
  - 6. "The spirit of knowledge"
  - 7. "And of the fear of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:2)
- B. Perhaps each, or at least several, of these are to be sub-

divided into other expressions:

- 1) "Wisdom" would include the "spirit of longsuffering," a spirit of perseverance, of sacrifice.
  - 2) A "spirit of understanding" might include "a spirit of love," a "spirit of patience," or "a spirit of discernment."
  - 3) The "spirit of counsel" might include "a spirit of rebuke," "a spirit of instruction," or "a spirit of warning."
  - 4) The "spirit of might" could include "a spirit of ministry," a "spirit of help," a "spirit of righteousness," "a spirit of steadfastness," and "a spirit of giving."
  - 5) The spirit of knowledge" might include "a spirit of faith," "a spirit of hope," even a spirit of kindness. "The spirit of the fear of the Lord" might include a "spirit of obedience," a "spirit of zeal," a "spirit of forbearance," and many others.
- C. I must admit that I have been loose in these statements, for there seems to be an overlapping of these virtues between these names. "Spirit of Christ" covers them all. If any member of His body has His spirit he certainly will reflect some of these. We would expect a sweet spirit for sure. But it might not appear sweet to all, for it displeased many while He was here on the earth, so much that they crucified Him. The same spirit in us is sometimes a "savor of death," though it might be "a savor of life" (2 Corinthians 2:16).
- D. Any time a church, or a part of a church, becomes selfish, argumentative (spirit of debate), and carnal, we may be sure the spirit of Christ is pushed out and the position of that individual or that church is jeopardized.

## **V. MARKS MAY BE IMITATED**

- A. Though men may not know what true spirituality is they all seem to recognize that a church should be spiritual. To this end one may find a lot of worked up activity, zeal,



and appeal of one kind or another. Every virtue may be imitated outwardly, though none can be duplicated in reality. One of the deceptions which seems easily to creep in among Baptists is a kind of license substituting for liberty.

- B. Baptists know that we are free in Christ, not bound by law but under grace. They know that a lot of formalism is practiced among other Christian groups so they feel free to improvise as they go along. They insist that the Word of God is an all-sufficient rule of faith and practice, yet they have imported many schemes which others have devised for promoting the Lord's work.
- C. "Nothing succeeds like success," so they resort to what seemed like a successful program practiced by others and the appearance of good is mistaken for true righteousness. It is even said, "Better err on the side of wrong judgment than to do nothing at all." But who says it is better? Doing nothing is not very appealing and, indeed, is not a necessary course, as the Lord will keep His people busy if they will be willing to act within the will of God.
- D. There is a "spirit of error" (1 John 4:6) easily mistaken for "the spirit of truth." How can we know the difference?
- E. "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."
- F. The world, and this often includes unspiritual men who have been born again, will accept the programs and practices which men devise in preference to what God has said. The spirit of Christ is a spirit of truth. The Bible is given to us to be able to weigh, measure, or judge what is of God.
- G. A measure of the spirit of truth is the liberty one feels who has this spirit and is willing to walk in it. Others feel that there is too much restraint on men if they go by the Bible, particularly if they are Baptists. Any time special

ridicule is heaped on Christians or preachers or churches by the world, particularly the entertainment world of television, it is Baptists who become the brunt of that ridicule. We, on the other hand, do not feel hemmed in by God's Word or its restrictions.

- H. We enjoy a remarkable liberty, but we know better than to use that liberty for an occasion to the flesh (Galatians 5:1,13). Just because we are free does not mean that; we are free to devise practices or rules for the church or its members which are not found in the Bible.
- I. Think about this when you devise a rule to make it easy to do certain things without exercising the responsibility for one another which God would have us assume. For example, if we set a rule that members will be excluded from the church after three Sundays, or three months, or six months, of non— attendance, so we do not have to pursue the Lord's order (Matthew 18:15-19), we are involved in the spirit of error and not the spirit of truth.
- J. Conscientious brethren seem not to have learned this. In their zeal to maintain a correct order and spiritual standard in the church they resort to such legalism. In doing so they actually commit as great sin as might be if they delayed to take action for a time and some brother, or brethren, awakened to realize that the church was becoming burdened with unspiritual members and was moved, or the group moved, to begin to exercise the responsibility God intended us to exercise in being our brother's keeper.
- K. Another example is the annual call of pastors which used to be practiced quite extensively. If the pastor became zealous to reprove, rebuke, exhort, or deal with sin, and the brethren were not disposed to heed such, they did not have to stir up a schism for they could wait till the year was up and just call somebody else.
- L. Conscientious pastors would feel the pain of these dealings, but the church moved right on with their legal program and felt it was better that way, since they did not

have to be responsible to heed the unwelcome admonitions of the old pastor. Any system we set up which enables us to avoid the responsibility which God intends for us to assume is a result of the spirit of error and not the spirit of truth.

## **VI. SUMMARIZING THE MARKS**

- A. A church of the Lord is a peculiar body of peculiar people. They are not strange, but they are unlike anything found naturally among men. Her doctrines will be Scriptural.
- B. Her liberty will be evident, even to strangers. Her spirit will be the spirit of Christ. This will mean that she will have a spirit of liberty, a spirit of truth, and those other evidences of the sweet savor of His knowledge which ought to characterize God's people. Any imitations will be outward and easily recognized by those with spiritual discernment.

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## Chapter Seven

# A SCRIPTURAL CHURCH IN ACTION

### Introduction

Because, as we say, men are human, it is difficult to find a church which would in all points conform to the pattern of the Scriptures. The first church had its Judas, but because the Lord was present with her the spirit of Christ was evident. Not even the dispute among the disciples over who should be greatest in the kingdom could completely destroy the testimony of His presence. Nor can that spirit today be easily removed from a church which has been taught properly.

### I. HER HEAD IS STILL PRESENT

- A. Ignorance of the Word, carnality among members, fear of hurting people's feelings, and other similar things, work against the Head's having his way as He desires.
- B. A pastor who instructs properly and a people who have a few who will to follow, can be the means of the church's allowing Christ to minister His spirit to the congregation (Galatians 3:5).

### II. HER RESPONSE WILL BE CONSISTENT

- A. It seems that most churches suffer their ups and downs. They are on a mountaintop at one service but down in the valley in another. This comes because men are not dependable. It is even seen in the churches of the New Testament.
- B. But some of them, in spite of poverty or persecution, were consistent in their faithfulness. Others, like Corinth, were the victims of their own carnality. Here we are speaking of the ideal — that which most certainly can be, even in our day.

### III. THE CARING SPIRIT AMONG US

- A. The spirit of joy, of love, of peace, of zeal, of evangelism, of truth — the spirit of Christ — will characterize her services and her members will evidence this in their lives at home, at work, and at other places.

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- B. When wrong shows up each member will respond to their Head, Christ, to rectify the wrong. They thus will attempt to restore the erring brother (Matthew 18:15-20), pursuing the steps there laid down. No distinction will be made between private and public sins.
  - C. True, some things are more damaging than others, but sin is sin and it is always against the Christ. Whether it is against me, personally, is not the question. The words "against thee" in vs. 15 are not to be used as though one were excused from doing anything until the action is directly against him.
  - D. In fact, the words are not in many of the oldest manuscripts. They are not damaging to the sense though, for any sin is against Christ and so, against His body. In that case it is also against me for I am a member of the body.
  - E. Thus it becomes something for which I am to assume personal responsibility to go and rebuke such a brother, endeavoring to get him to come to repentance. If I consider myself as a weak brother and him as a member of the same body of which I am a member, and both of us subject to Christ, I will show that spirit of love and forbearance which was Christ's.
  - F. Failing at first, I must take one or two others, evidently brethren whom the fallen one might heed, and make another try. Failing here, the two or three can now bring the matter before the whole church, the first time it should have been mentioned openly. In this regard comes the greatest weakness of church members and the occasion of the greatest hurt to all concerned. Members are not at liberty to discuss the sins of a brother in the church with any but the sinning brother and, then, those who are being involved in an effort to restore him.
  - G. When the matter, after the private efforts have twice failed, is before the church, that body can take immediate action. At least two brethren have been to the offender and know his sin and his unwillingness to admit it or to repent. The church's action, by vote, will ask the brother

for an accounting to the whole body. They may do this by sending individuals directly, the closest thing to a committee found in the passage.

- H. If the brother has not stopped coming to services, though, he may be there to hear for himself. If distances require, the word may be sent by mail, though, admittedly, this is not the best way. If he will hear the admonition of the church, repent, and do his brotherly duty as a member, he is forgiven and the matter ends there. If he will not, he is to be treated as a "heathen man and a publican."
- I. This does not say he is to be shunned as a leper, but he cannot be a welcome participant in the ordinary affairs of a spiritual member of the church. The church is the "Israel of God" and all others are "heathen," that is, strangers or outsiders. He may still be admonished as a brother, though he is not to be the companion and close associate of a believer. To treat him as a publican means that he be viewed as having stepped outside of the restricted area of God's separated people for the supposed value of this present age. One who loves this present world is unfit to be a part of the body of Christ.
- J. In none of this procedure is there to be any spirit of rancor. We are to be ready to forgive and happy if he repents. We are always to be willing to restore him to fellowship in the church. If the church is what it ought to be, such a procedure will stir great burden and grief for the offender. It should also move us to great appeal to God in prayer. We must not only be concerned for the loss of the brother but mindful of our own susceptibility to fall.

#### **IV. A WORSHIPING BODY**

- A. The principle function of such a church will be to worship and honor her Head, Christ. This is more important than most anything they can do, because it is what God seeks (John 4:23, 24), and it places the emphasis on God and not on man. True, they are to be evangelistic, but the

means of winning outsiders. is the spirit of devotion, of love, of sweetness, in those in the body.

- B. The great promotional efforts to reach numbers and enlist outsiders will not be a fit substitute for the effective Lives of those who have the sweet savor of Christ. This sweet savor of Christ is what gives victory, for God causes them to triumph always and in every place (2 Corinthians 2:14-16). There is a strong hint in the next verse than any other means may be a corrupting of the word of God.
- C. You should note that this worship is to be "in spirit and in truth." This means that the spirit of the worship should be the same as the spirit of Christ and the whole should be according to the truth. This will allow God to be God and His will to be supreme.
- D. The meeting will not simply be designed to appeal to men and to draw out their emotions to the satisfying of ourselves, but it will be an honest and sincere manifesting of our love for our Lord and an honoring of His name. The singing, the preaching, the praying, the fellowshiping, the testifying, the studying of His Word, and all that we do will reflect a spirit of worship. If our devotion is not sincere He will be the first to know. We ought to learn this early.

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## Chapter Eight

# STARTING OFF RIGHT

### **Introduction**

It would be presumptuous to suppose that any of the sweet spirit of Christ could be long maintained, if seen at all, in any people simply because they had all trusted the Lord. There is a peculiar necessity of several factors before any people can fill God's purpose.

### **I. "FITLY FRAMED TOGETHER"**

- A. If one's physical body is to function correctly, be healthy, and long endure, it must needs have been born with a normal healthy arrangement of all its parts. Then the conduct of that body must be developed and coordinated so that each of its parts function normally in harmony with all the other parts. The physical body becomes a fitting symbol of the order and arrangement of the Lord's spiritual body, the church (cf. Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and all those portions which speak of his body, other than his physical body). This body is literal, visible, and fit together with one Head.
- B. When we speak of the body's being "fitly framed together" we are using Paul's language (Ephesians 2:21).
  - 1) "All the building" is "each particular building," for there is not one, large, universal building.
  - 2) The original language requires such a rendering as this, or "each several building."
  - 3) By "fitly framed" is meant "closely joined" or compacted. The word derives from a composite of three parts, together, joint (part), and to lay or arrange together in a proper manner, as the parts of a discourse.
- C. The human body is properly arranged and joined, each part serving a specific function and served jointly by all the other parts. Each contributes to the sustaining of



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each other and of all together. This is the way it' is supposed to be with a church. In order for this to be true the organization of that church must have been correct according to New Testament requirement.

- D. I do not presume that most of my readers will not know how this is done, yet I am sometimes surprised to find that less care than was needed was exercised in the formation of a new congregation.
- E. Each new human body must come directly from a proper mother and father who supply the elements (genes) for a new body. While we do not know how all these function, we know they are there; and by God's grace mistakes are not made, though sin in the world sometimes causes some of these genes to be damaged and to produce a faulty body.
- F. With the New Testament we can avoid this in the formation of a new church. It is done intentionally, by the deliberate action of one church as a whole setting apart members for the specific purpose. These designated members must declare their willingness to do two things before they can be a church:
  - 1) 1. To meet regularly for worship, study, and such things as a church does.
  - 2) They must be willing to help one another in their own mutual spiritual growth and the preaching of the gospel.
  - 3) The pledge to do these two things is a sort of covenant, though other things are said which enlarge on these two ideas. When they pledge themselves, usually by a vote or show of hands, this is the formation of the church. The home or sponsoring church set a group apart for this, others may come in and join in the pledge and be a part. Since fellowship is an intended goal, and cooperation with other churches is a desired end, it is wise to invite other churches and ordained help, when available, to sit in counsel at such an organization.

- G. A written statement of the beliefs and purposes of the group should be read, and a record should be kept for future reference.
  - 1) These things are essential, except the counseling of other churches and the writing down of records, but both are advisable.
  - 2) These things are the elements of formative discipline. Not only are they guidelines, they are a sort of safeguard against looseness and all sorts of error.

## **II. "PUTTING ON CHRIST"**

- A. It follows as a matter of course that any members set apart to go into a new organization will have scriptural baptism, the first declaration of putting on Christ (Romans 6:3-5 ; Galatians 3:27). This identifying with Him in His death and resurrection is essential to our having the spirit of Christ, separated from the world and living in Him.
- B. Then there must be a continuing in the same "putting on," or manifesting of our being one with Him (Romans 13:14). To so "dress up" in Christ is a part of our "learning Him" (Ephesians 4:20) and this learning is to "put off ... the old man" and to "put on the new man" which is to be renewed in the spirit of our minds, so as to have the spirit of Christ (Ephesians 4:20-25).
- C. A zeal for doctrinal, correctness must of necessity include a zeal for this dressing up in Christ so as to be a new man. This is what the church is all about and this is why this body (church) is essential for "the spirit of Christ" to continue in believers. These things are a part of the "obedience of faith" and such an obedience of faith not only makes us the body of Christ but it cannot be His body apart from it.
- D. How many Laodiceans are there who feel that they have need of nothing (because they are doctrinally sound, so they think) and do not know that they are "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked?" (Revelation 3:17).

- 1) "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find (the) faith upon the earth?" (Luke 18:8).
  - 2) The implication of the question is that he will hardly find it.
  - 3) The faith spoken of is like the faith of Christ as was demonstrated by the woman in the parable of this context who did not cease to ask, and keep on asking, that she be avenged of her adversary. She got an answer.
  - 4) We must have such a spirit of faith and ask for our Lord's return on the same basis.
- E. So we see both a formative discipline in the establishing of a church and a corrective discipline in its continuance. This maintains harmony and effectiveness in the body of Christ. Just knowing the legal steps is not enough. We must operate in the spirit; of truth as well as its letter (2 Corinthians 3:6).

### **III. BARE BONES OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

We have seen that discipline is essential for the body of Christ to live and function effectively.

- 1) Effective discipling is the meaning of discipline.
- 2) Exclusion from membership is only a tragic, if necessary, extreme to which we sometimes have to go. But it is not; the way to have harmony and should only be used as a last resort.
- 3) We do not mean that one must have lapsed into base carnality to deserve such discipline, but if he fails in the essentials — regular assembling with the brethren, and helping them to grow and function spiritually — then he becomes the object of discipline. And if he neglects or refuses to heed when re-proved for this neglect he may become the object of such discipline as results in exclusion.
- 4) Loving care, prayerful and careful step by step action

(cf. Mathew 18:15-20), must be taken to restore the neglectful or careless or rebellious. If this does not succeed he must be dealt with "as an heathen man (outside the Israel of God, the church) and "as a publican" (one who "does business" with the world for selfish gain).

- 5) Still, he must not be treated as an enemy, but entreated as a brother (2 Thessalonians 3:15). Row gentle must a Christian be, yet he must be firm (2 Corinthians 2:9-11).

#### **IV. LIKE A FAMILY**

- A. We loosely refer to all born again as in the family of God and, indeed, they ought to be and would be if they would abide in Him. Some will not bear fruit and are cut off (John 15:1-7). This does not negate his birth, but it changes his relationship. Family members must have a relationship to be family. Careful observation will show this in the New Testament.
- B. When a new baby comes into the home he is very precious, but hardly "sweet" to any but the mother at that stage.
  - 1) Still he is precious and in hours other family members begin to feel the attachment. He may be pretty "tough" as a child goes, but he needs the special care of mother, father, and even of brothers and sisters.
  - 2) This care protects the baby but disciplines the others. Love is the melding element which unites: the family and provides safety for the little one and joy to all.
  - 3) This relationship is for life. And it ministers to the life of all, providing joy, peace, happiness. There is a price to pay, but it is considered worth it.
  - 4) God designed such relationship for our good and His glory, but specially to teach us of spiritual relation-

ships.

- C. "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself" (Romans 14:7).
- 1) In the body this is especially true. We are not separate entities, bearing responsibility only to God directly, but we are intimately joined to the family of God and we please the Father as we bear that responsibility according to His will.
  - 2) As a child grows older he needs his brothers and sisters to teach by example and to encourage him in the learning process. His character and personality are shaped by this relationship.
  - 3) It is true in the members of the Father's family, the local church. Every member is needed and every member needs every other. God set it up that way and the selfish man who will not be a part of the Lord's church is unworthy of the relationship and will miss the place of a ruler with the Elder Brother in the Kingdom to come.

### **Conclusion**

The author hopes and prays that the members of the Lord's churches, and other believers too, may have managed to remain with us this far. Though interruptions have plagued the preparation of this material it is our sincere hope that the general theme has become obvious.

There is a spirit of Christ. It is holy, sweet, peaceful, loving, kind, zealous, and persistent. It is kind but firm, giving and forgiving. It is supplied by the ministering of the Lord to humble hearts. It is designed to make the body of Christ to reflect the fullness of Godhood after the pattern it was manifest in the Christ. It is doctrine, but much more than doctrine and may even be dissipated and destroyed by a legal handling of doctrine.

This spirit is not understood so as to be explained by many, but it will be discerned even by the unlearned and the unbeliever

when it is present in the assembly of the saints, or even when it is seen in a single believer.

It is the effective means of the church's bearing a testimony which is satisfactory and will manifest the sweet savor of the knowledge of Christ. When this spirit prevails in a local body (the only kind there is) there will be harmony and the zeal to preserve a correct order and discipline will be present, so that by formative discipline and by corrective discipline the spirit will be preserved in a church (1 Corinthians 5:5).

The presence of the spirit of Christ in a church is the certain evidence that the church is His. When it is lacking for any length of time, or very long, He removes the candlestick" and the members may go on with the motions of their religion, but it is no longer the Lord's church.

There is no legal way one may attain this spirit, or preserve it. It is ministered by the Lord to those who will listen with the "hearing of faith." It is becoming less and less evident in our day and when the Son of man cometh He will be searching for it (Luke 18:8). Will He find it in your heart and in your church?

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## APPENDIX I

# THE SHEKINAH

### **Introduction**

Shekinah is a word from the Hebrew pronounced she-KY-nah, accent on the capitalized syllable. It is not found in the Hebrew Bible, but the rabbis used it to refer to the glory, meaning that special manifestation of God above the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of holies.

Vowels were not found in that ancient language, but had to be learned as one grew up or as he learned the language. Only the consonants were normally written, though "vowel pointings" were later added for ease in learning the sounds. For this reason there is lack of agreement as to how to pronounce the name of God: YHWY. Was it YAH-weh? Or was it Ye-HO-wah (Jehovah)?

The root for sheki-nah is shakan (SHKN) and means "he dwelt, lodged, settled, abode." Adding the ending (H) the vowels changed and came "to be "a dwelling" (not a building, but the act of dwelling). The logic of the word lies in its basic meaning of "settling down," so that the noun form comes to mean "one who is familiar," an old-timer, or kamaaina in Hawaiian.

The root word from which sheiknah comes is found often. Note specially Numbers 9:17, 18, 20, 21, 22. The root here is used, and in most of these verses refers to *the cloud by day and appearance of fire by night* which "rested" upon the tabernacle "always" (vs. 16).

The cloud and fire symbolized the settling of the Lord at the place. He hid, taken up the leadership of Israel when they left Egypt (Exodus 13:21, 22) and made His home (lodging, abode) upon the tabernacle after it was set up at Sinai. Israel could always tell when the Lord wanted them to stop, or to go -- and in which direction. He was visible all day and all night in the cloud and fire. The Ark of the Covenant was *the symbol of His presence*. God is omnipresent, but He is specially manifest to His people in their gathering together to Him.

## **I. THE MARK OF GOD'S PEOPLE**

- A. We preachers tend to set forth those doctrines which our church believes and which others hardly believe or do not believe at all, and emphasize these doctrinal distinctives as the identification of the true church. Well, those marks are there, but sometimes they are lost in a fog of ignorance or controversy. There is a clearer mark; a far more effective evidence that we are God's people. Without it, all those doctrinal distinctions may be but hateful things to the outsider, or to the weak.
- B. But there is an essential mark which will not be hated nor gainsaid: It is **The Presence of God**. And it is not hard to see or understand. Maybe people will have difficulty explaining what it is about us, but they will say, "God is in you of a truth" (1 Corinthians 14:25). What brings the unbeliever to say this? It is that calm, warm, submissive worship and instructive service in which order prevails and every brother esteems other better than himself, where the Word of God is spoken plainly and respected by all.
- C. This quiet spirit of submissiveness and humility reflects a love and a yearning which tells the stranger, even if he is not a believer, that God is there. Paul rebuked the Corinthians for that *other spirit* among them which said, "I have a word, a Psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation, and I want to be heard." God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. And in His presence there is peace!
- D. Everybody knew that the Lord was in the midst of Israel – that is if they understood that the cloud and the fire signified His presence. Any man or woman, boy or girl could look up day or night and know that He was there. Even a stranger, and at some distance, could see He was there.
- E. This Intimate Abider went with them in obvious direction of their way until they came to Kadesh-barnea. There, a spy from each tribe was sent into the land. Two came



back in great faith with a glowing report and were ready to go in with the nation, but ten came back with pessimistic reports and filled the people with fear so that they wept and cried and desired to return to Egypt. Moses pleaded but they were adamant, so Moses went to God in intercession for this people. He had reminded the people that the Lord was with them (vs. 9) and in his prayer he strongly insisted on this fact as evidenced by the cloud and fire (vs. 14). God answered and forgave their rebellion but insisted that they must submit and must bear the consequences of their folly and He would fill the earth with His glory.

- F. A truly frightening statement is made in vs. 34. God said, "Ye shall know my breach of promise." How can God change His promise? Read the possibility and the reason in Jeremiah 18:1-17, especially vs. 7-10.
- G. So Moses conveyed God's message to Israel: "The Lord is not among you" (Numbers 14:22). "Ye are turned away from the Lord, therefore the Lord will not be with you" (vs. 43).
- H. Then the people presumed to go up into the land anyway, but "the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and Moses, departed not out of the camp" (vs. 44) and they suffered a great defeat from their enemies.
- I. So they wandered without God's direction for forty years, but when all those above age twenty at the exodus, except Joshua and Caleb, were dead God brought their children by Joshua's leadership, into the land. The presence of the Lord did not go with them in their wanderings and only is mentioned two times -- once when the people resisted Moses and Aaron (Numbers 16:42), and again when Moses appointed Joshua to take his place (Deuteronomy 31:15). So they lost the overt evidence of God's presence. But He did respond to the intercessions of His men and gave them directions in later years.

## **II. THE SYMBOL OR THE REALITY**

- A. The people came to think of God's presence in conjunction with the ark of the covenant. The cloud and fire were comforting when visible, but hard hearts soon get used to doing without what does not appear before their eyes and they concoct an explanation for its absence.
- B. The cloud symbolized the glory of God's presence (Exodus 14:19; cf. Romans 9:4). It covered Sinai when the law was given (Exodus 24:15-18) and it filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34, 35). It later filled Solomon's temple (2 Chronicles 7:1 ; 1 Corinthians 11). Ezekiel watched it disappear as God described the filthy minds of the people (Ezekiel 10:3, 4, 18, 19; Ezekiel 11:1, 23).
- C. The mountain in this last verse is doubtless the Mount of Olives and it was from there that the glory departed from sight. God let Ezekiel see it return (chapter 43), but the conditional things of that chapter leave us doubting that it ever returned after the captivity (Ezekiel 43:7-12, and note the "if" in vs. 11).
- D. The cloud-glory shall be present in the kingdom (Isaiah 4:4-6 ; Isaiah 60:2) and Israel shall enjoy it again. So much for the symbolism of the presence.
- E. Meantime, the glory appeared for them in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6), though for Israel's sake the symbol is connected with Him at least twice (Matthew 17:5; Acts 1:9), but only for believers among them.
- F. The reality for us lies in the "promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4 ; Luke 24:49 ; cf. Acts 2:33, 39). The Holy Spirit came on the Pentecost next after His ascension and now dwells in the church, that local body which Jesus left on earth to manifest His glory to the world. That church is "a habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22).
- G. Though Jesus, the true glory (Hebrews 1:3), had ascended from that same mountain where Ezekiel had seen the cloud-symbol disappear, He did not leave the "children" "orphans" (John 14:18), but came to them as "the Lord,

the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:17, 18 ; 1 Corinthians 15:45), and so dwells "in the midst of the churches" (Revelation 1:13, with vs. 20). When even a few of her members gather in His name there is He in their midst (Matthew 18:20).

### **III. THE POWER OF THAT PRESENCE**

- A. As Jesus administers the affairs of His churches, we recognize Him. The words he spoke fill our hearts and regulate our lives. And the power of that spiritual presence is beyond words to express adequately. The singing in the assembly goes with us to our daily affairs. The sweetness of His Presence spills over into our daily lives. The rebuke of His Presence is felt in our hearts when we sin, so that we must repent. We are constrained by His love (2 Corinthians 5:14) to remember His mercy and His faith.
- B. None of these things have the overt visibility of a cloud or a pillar of fire. But still they are visible and they testify to the very real presence of the Lord in the midst of His people. In the last analysis God always makes things very simple for men if they are willing to heed Him. The "But one thing is needful" principle spoken by Jesus to Martha (Luke 10:42) illustrates this principle. Only cultic answers require difficult and elaborate things for acceptance.
  - 1. Only ONE thing is required for men to be acceptable with God: faith. This can be expressed many ways, but it is just one thing. Whether it is "amen" when He speaks, or "Yes," when He asks something of us, it is simple faith — no conditions.
  - 2. Only ONE reason holds for His rejection of a man, or for his exclusion from His special people: rejection. It can be a "no," to His invitation; it can be "contempt" for the pleas of His people when he has sinned against his church; it is any kind of refusal to yield.
  - 3. Relative to church discipline in its ultimate expression — exclusion — there is only ONE matter which ever allows

it: "neglect to hear the church" (Matthew 18:17). There are not many offenses, as lying, stealing, adultery, heresy, etc.

4. Only ONE provision need be made for the deliverance of any man: Jesus (the cross). There is not the need of countless works, prayers, effort.
5. Only ONE sure mark serves as an ultimate distinctive to identify God's chosen people, His house on earth: HE LIVES THERE. A house is notable not for its boards, its architecture, its age, its location, etc., but for its occupant (or former occupant). Is this the Lord's house?\*

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\*Taken in whole from THE REMINDER, January 1983.

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## APPENDIX II

# HOLDING FAST THE HEAD

Colossians 2:19

### **Introduction**

It is a source of constant amazement that men do not grasp the meaning of the word "body" as it applies to the church (as in our text cited above). Instead they think of something like a body politic, such as the Congress (a legis-lative body). I even heard an assembly of messengers at an association referred to as "this august body."

When Paul used the word in First Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and all through Ephesians and Colossians, he was using a figure of speech for the human body. This thought is certainly prominent in Romans 12:4-12, but is even more explicit in 1 Corinthians 12:12-26. There he names the foot, the hand, the ear, the eye, the "smelling" (nose), feeble members, uncomely and comely parts, and honorable and the less honorable. There is no need to prove that all these are "tempered together" so that there is no lack in any of the parts.

Consequently there is no schism in the body. This word, pronounced SIZ-em, means a division, as a rent or tear (in a net, for example). One hand does not argue with the other about doing its job, or with a foot or eye or ear. Each does his job with no questions. Why? Because each is subject to one head. Our physical body has but one head (unlike Mark Twain's "Those Extraordinary Twins"), so there is never any confusion as to con-trol or responsibility. If only church members could function in this way!!!

There is just one Head, Christ. God has determined to set Him as Head over all things (Ephesians 1:22). In the will and purpose of God this is already done (Hebrews 2:8), so that there is nothing which is not put in subjection under Him. But now we see not yet all things put under Him. Before this can be realized there had to be first His own subjection (Hebrews 2:9). Now He is exalted (Philippians 2:9). So what remains before this Headship is fully in control?

First, we must have the same mind which was in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5). If my hand has another mind than my head there will not be a proper re-sponse by that hand.

Those members of the body who were made alive through Christ in the New Birth were no longer supposed to be alive to the world. They were expected to declare their position by being buried, showing they were dead, and also showing that they had experienced a resurrection to new life (Romans 6:2-4).

But our experience in this area creates some problems. Even the Apostle Paul ran into this problem: "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me" (Romans 7:21). But Paul found the answer — "through Jesus Christ our Lord" (vs. 25).

### **A. He is the Head of the Church Now**

We do not have to wait until all things are subdued to Him; we can submit to Him NOW (Ephesians 1:22). By our submission to His authority as individuals we are "fitly framed together" by His "effectual working" in each of the parts (Ephesians 4:15, 16). This building "fitly framed together" functions as a unit.

I do not say, "My eye saw you turn the corner, so my feet ran to the door so my eye could see you and my ear could hear your greeting and my tongue could speak to you." I simply say, "I saw you turn the corner and ran to meet you." All of these actions are controlled. by my one mind. So every member is controlled by one mind: Christ thus solves the problem of dissent and confusion. It also erases the prominence of any one member.

Only such persons as submit to the one Head are true members of the body. If a member is not in submission, so as to obey the Head, it is to be cut off from the body. This has nothing to do with the New Birth, but it has everything to do with the relationship.

### **B. The Life of the Body Comes From the Head**

Unless the members recognize the authority of the Head (Christ) there will not be the manifestation of spiritual life (2

Corinthians 4:10). Thus each member is to take no step except as He directs. My opinion, my feelings, my convenience are not in my power.

Only as the Head is effectually joined and in control will the body function in a proper manner. "He is Lord" (Acts 2:36 ; Acts 9:5). Deliver me, Lord, from assuming power over self, much less over others. Life includes function.

All of those experiences which maintain our existence, supply our joys, perpetuate our name and the cause we stand for are involved in life. But if we lose our heads or even have it disjoined with a broken neck our physical life is lost or seriously impaired. The surest way to kill someone is through decapitation.

True, if vital members are destroyed the life is Jeopardized or forfeited. Thus we see that even the Head is dependent upon the members. What a responsibility this places upon church members.

God's order is that Christ be the Head of every man and the man be the head of the woman (his wife) (1 Corinthians 11:3). It is unseemly in natural things when this order is perverted or destroyed. The very angels are frustrated by such (1 Corinthians 11:10).

If it be so in all men, how much should it be so in Christians and, of all Christians, it certainly should be so in church members. It is God's order. Not only is this subjection to proper authority supposed to be maintained, but every care is to be used to see that it is evident that such is true (See 1 Corinthians 11:1-16).

### **C. What Is It to Hold Fast the Head?**

First, it means that each member recognizes that Christ has absolute authority over the whole body (Ephesians 4:15, 16).

This is the only way that we can be fitly framed together and compacted. If even one member rejects the authority of the Head there is a schism in the body. Membership in the body, then, is not a matter of finding others agreeable. It is not be-

cause we have arrived at mutual understanding of various doctrines, as though negotiation were the way to solutions. And it is not because we are agreed on an order of procedure which we feel might be successful.

It is purely a matter of our submitting to the authority of Christ individually. This is reflected in the fact that the way we continue to be Christians is the same as the way we became Christians in the beginning (Colossians 2:6). How was that? Through absolute and unreserved surrender to Him.

Fellowship between individual members is dependent upon our mutual relationship to the Christ. It is not because others are friendly, gentle, have ability or good tempers. It is because each is united in submission to Christ. Any fellowship based on PEOPLE is not a holding of the Head. A fellowship based on a mutual human relationship, such as a committal to a certain organization which is man made, is not a proper holding of the Head.

Absalom was able to muster a "party" of supporters, but this was a "party spirit" and was not true fellowship. Far too much of such "agreement" is sought and depended on among God's people. We demand that they cast their lot in with the same system or group which pleases us. But this is not the fellowship of the body of Christ; it does not hold the Head.

Illustrating further: A fellowship of preachers which depends on love of fishing is not Christian fellowship, much less is it church fellowship. A fellowship of preachers which hangs on their each belonging to some lodge is not Christian fellowship. In fact, my observation has been that such tends to destroy true church fellowship.

#### **D. Conditions of Holding Fast the Head**

There are three matters which must receive careful attention if we are to hold fast to the Head, Christ. Our submission to Him depends on these:

The cross must deal deeply with our flesh.

Many Christians think of the cross as only providing the sacrifice by which we were originally born again, but there is the taking up of the cross daily. Paul spoke of his glorying only in



the cross for by it the world was crucified to him and he to the world.

If the Lord is to mean anything to us as our chief Authority, then it is necessary that we be cut loose from this present evil world. And when we say "present evil world" we are not merely referring to those things which are obviously carnal, as lying, stealing, adultery, profanity, and the like. And not only do we refer to pride, malice, hate, and the ugly emotions which sometimes make us ashamed.

But we include ambition, selfishness, self-sufficiency, legality (or legalism) — any dependency on self, on people, on systems of men. Out of these grow pride, high-mindedness, malice, hatred, and other marks of self-aggrandizement.

The very emotions which we think of as good and which identify with goals which were set before us as children as being desirable are often the very thing which prevent our committing ourselves fully to the Lord and depending upon Him alone for all our needs.

### **E. We must learn to walk according to the Spirit.**

Most believers, not just young believers, do not know the difference between walking according to the spirit and walking in the flesh.

We go by our feelings. Feelings are good, but they are undependable, both because they change so quickly and because we may misinterpret their meaning. One may act according to his desires and he may be sincere when he does so, but his desires may be improperly motivated.

A desire to win, to succeed, to build a reputation, to have a name, may smuggle itself in to our hearts when our desire should be only that His will be done. Before it is safe to follow one's desire he must be sure that he has completely submitted his own will to God.

Then one may desire the office of a bishop (or pastor; cf. 1 Timothy 3:1), or whatever he pleases, for then the desire may be assumed to be of God. But many (of whom God did not call) have desired the office and such should not be in that office. The submission must be absolute, and it must be to Him, not

just to parent or friend, or system.

In order to walk in the spirit we must first have been dealt with by the cross, as suggested above. Then we must be able to see from the written Word that the matter which claims our heart's attention, as will be the case in the Spirit's leadership, is something which is according to God's teachings in the Word. God has never led anyone to do something which is not provided for in the Word.

If every member of a church were led by the Spirit of the Lord (is walking in the spirit), then two or more men would not be nominated for pastor in a church where there is to be only one pastor. And when a vote is taken Only one man would receive any votes. True, we do not always know when the Spirit is leading us. We simply have to seek God's will, humble ourselves under His hand, and do the thing which we believe His Word approves.

One of the ways He tells us of His will so that we may walk in His spirit is to have a burden for what He desires. When we seek His honor and study His Word so as to learn His revealed will, then He will give us a burden for certain things.

I know that this is vague and indefinite, for men often become obsessed with the idea that a certain program, a certain location, or a certain work ought to be done and we feel a strong desire towards it, when it may not be God's will at all. We need to know that man has a spirit which is quickened to life in the New Birth so that it is possible for God to communicate directly with him.

Then he has a soul which has been at the center of his life all of his days. This soul is possessed of our minds, our emotions, and our wills. Only as these three are dealt with by the cross can the mind of the Spirit be communicated to us and our wills can be trusted to do what is right.

So if God disturbs your thinking or demands attention from you it may be that He is speaking to your spirit. The disturbed feeling may arise because of a conflict between His will and yours. It would be interesting to study the word "burden" in the Bible. Use a good concordance and see what you find.

A proper relationship with the Head of the church means a proper relationship with the members.

Yes, it could be the other fellow who is not submissive to the Head, but when each of the members is submissive to the Head they will work together in absolute harmony, just as one hand works with the other, and with the eyes and the feet, and every other member of our physical bodies. When a member of our physical bodies is not functioning properly because it has an affliction or has been injured, all the other members respond in whatever way they can to relieve the one which is hurt.

In extreme cases it may be necessary to remove surgically the injured member for the well-being of the whole body. But the HEAD is never removed. It is always essential that the head be in charge. If one finds himself out of harmony with one or more members it behooves him to examine his own motives and to look to God's Word to see why this is.

I realize the tendency is to blame the other members and maybe to be offended at them but this is unbecoming. We must first be sure that we are willing for God's will to be done and that Christ is in control of our whole life.

### **In Summary**

The word "head" is a figure of authority, as the head of a physical body is in control of every member of the body.

There can only be one head, one authority.

Christ is designated Head of all things, but is presently acting in that capacity over the church. Eventually He will claim this authority over all men and all kingdoms.

Apart from the Head there is no life (spiritual life) in the church (body), just as there would be none in the physical body if the head were severed. Function is a large element of life and without proper function there is no life. Actually, without life there is no function.

Holding fast the Head means we recognize that Christ's authority over the church is absolute! It means that no natural propensities in men are to be considered as elements of the life of the body.

These conditions are essential to our holding Christ as Head:

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1. Being dealt with by the cross.
  2. Walking according to the spirit.
  3. Being in right relationship with the other members of the body.\*

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\*Taken in entirety from the June 1983 issue of THE REMINDER.