

The Workings of the Holy Spirit

J. McBroom.

(Extracted from Scripture Truth Vol. 36, 1948-50, page 273.)

The full blaze of the Lord's glory could not be manifested while He was on earth. A glimpse of it was seen both by Peter and Thomas (Matt. 16: 16; John 20: 28), but how could the disciples, or even those in the home at Nazareth, have lived had they known that the eternal God was amongst them in that lowly One? It began to come out immediately after the Spirit had come. Speaking of the Pentecostal gift, the Lord had said, "When the Comforter is come . . . He shall testify of Me," and again, "He shall glorify Me" (John 15: 26; John 16: 14).

This immediately began to be fulfilled in the new-born assembly, as the early chapters of Acts reveal. The One whom ye crucified, says Peter, God has made both Lord and Christ. Then the Apostles show from the Scriptures, which as illuminated by the Spirit, they can now use with holy freedom, that He is the King, the Son of David, the Prophet greater than Moses, the Priest greater than Aaron, till in Acts 7 Stephen beholds Him in glory as the Son of Man.

There is progress in all this, bespeaking the official and mediatory glory of our Lord, yet immediately Saul of Tarsus was converted he began to preach Him as the Son of God. This is personal and shows His place with the Father and the Spirit. The assembly had been constituted as the vessel formed by the Spirit to contain and carry on these things. This involves for the believer the transfer, in his soul's consciousness, from what he is in the flesh and in nature to what he is "in Christ."

That the Gospel embraces a racial question is made clear by the way the Spirit goes back to Adam in Romans 5. The death of Christ is the divinely ordered way out of all our ruined state as in Adam, and a new creation began in the resurrection of our Lord. Both the life and the relationship and the associations belonging to that life, come out in John 20: 17 and 22. As a moral being, placed in the conflict between good and evil, man cannot be lifted out of one world into another as a mere material object. Time and growth is called for, linked with the inner springs of the soul. It is a most searching process, reaching to the deepest depths of our being.

That this might be simplified for us, the Apostle Paul is led to show it as personified in himself. On the one hand he could say that concerning the law he was blameless, but on the other hand he had to learn that the sting of the law was in its tail, and that the last of the ten commandments claimed him, so that he had to say, "Sin revived, and I died." That really is the way we must all go if we are to participate in the blessedness of the new creation. If a man must be born again, it proves that all that precedes in our natural state is of no avail for God. Education, reformation, refinement, or whatever else may be named, all are ruled out, and man as born into this world, with the heritage of a fallen nature, called in Scripture, "the flesh," is incapable of pleasing God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." What then? Christ as our Substitute has died, and if we accept His death as ours all becomes clear and we come out of the dark tunnel of introspection into the light of being in the risen life of our Lord. It should be noted that no mere mental acquisition of these things will do: having the light of deliverance apart from the deep soul-searching that it involves is the cause of much of the superficiality and unreality that is so manifest today.

When this important landmark in the history of a soul is reached the individual becomes conscious that he has a new spiritual being and he begins a new spiritual history. Though still in the

body, where still sin resides, he knows that in the eye of God he has made the journey from Adam to Christ; he knows what it is to be "a man in Christ," so that he traces up his spiritual pedigree to Him as his Head in heaven. How perfect and admirable are the ways of our God! Oh, what a change it would bring about in the lives of countless multitudes if this transfer was accepted.

We are now intelligently on the ground of the purpose of God, and able to enter into and enjoy the precious and heavenly things that belong to this new order. There is not only our individual blessing but also that which is collective, as embracing family affairs. The saints are the assembly of God, and they are living stones in a spiritual house, the house of God where heavenly treasures are found.

Here again we may be enriched by "the revenues of the ages," for in the typical house we read of treasures, both the dedicated things and that which was taken as the spoils of war. (See 1 Chr. 26: 20-28). We may take the spoils of victory, which were found there, as typical of the way in which the whole circle of truth is available for us today, much of it having been won by men of God through many a conflict. The energy of Luther and many others may be recalled, as well as the labours and conflicts of men used in the recovery of truth well over a century ago.

But there were also the dedicated things and these we may take as typical of such spiritual realities as we have recorded in Ephesians 2. Here all is the fruit of Divine workmanship, for both Jew and Gentile are made one in a new economy of grace and glory with the middle wall of partition broken down. The distance is gone, and now there is the intimacy of nearness in Christ Jesus, and all is righteously established in His shed blood. Next comes the new man, followed by the truth of the body of Christ, in the full light of reconciliation. Then crowning it all, and in the light of the Holy Trinity, we have through the Lord Jesus access to the Father by the Spirit. And there is still more, for the saints are seen as the household of God, as a growing temple, and last of all as a habitation for God by the Spirit. Here surely we are in the midst of the accumulated treasures of God's house.

How infinitely blessed is all this! Surely Christianity is a faith system and above all our senses, for God has by His Spirit revealed to those that love Him things that eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and that have not entered into the heart of man. Now we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit which is God, "that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God (1 Cor. 2: 9-12).

From the group of things, mentioned in Ephesians 2, the Spirit takes the church as the body of Christ and dwells on it in a long parenthesis, which occupies the whole of chapter 3. The mystery, or secret of God, which was hidden throughout the ages, includes Christ and His church, but it is now revealed to His holy Apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This secret made known to faith, which has been spoken of as "the masterpiece of God," is defined in verse 6, "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ;" and the way into it is "by the Gospel."

The wealth of that Gospel shines in verse 8 — "the unsearchable riches of Christ." The administration of the mystery comes next, and here we see its connection with the heart and purpose of God from all eternity, for it is "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."

In these closing days there has been a ministry of the place of the church as the house of God and the body of Christ, which has brought blessing to many. The house is where God dwells and where His voice is heard, as we see in Acts 5: 3, 4; Acts 13: 2; 1 Timothy 4: 1; Ephesians 2: 22. It is where God rests, and consequently salvation and blessing are found there, along with the holy joy that belongs to the place, as we have prophetically announced in Psalm 132: 13-16. In the New Testament we find it to

be marked by both elevation and illumination, for, "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it . . . the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof " (Rev. 21: 22, 23). Truly it is the place,

"Where all His brightness God displays,
And the Lamb's glories dwell."

Our Lord said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." If we read Scripture in this way we shall not think of God's present house otherwise than as a living structure, composed of the saints who form Christ's assembly. It was formed by the Holy Spirit for God Himself, and will be His dwelling-place to eternity. In it shall be glory to God by Christ Jesus to all eternity, as we see in Ephesians 3: 21.

Nothing more clearly shows the sovereignty of God and His predilection for man, as distinct from all other of His creatures, than the fact that He dwells with and in man. It was ever His desire, but the entrance of sin, and the conflict between good and evil, was allowed to hinder. But even this He has overruled to accomplish His great end, by the redemption wrought out by His Son. God Himself is the Architect of this house; Christ is the Builder; the Holy Spirit we may with reverence liken to Cement, for He binds all together. Redeemed men are the material; Christ being formed in them, they are living stones. They were given to the Son by the Father in past eternal ages, and He presents them in His own acceptance with the Father, and in His own relationship as sons.

With this in view we are already blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, and made holy and without blame in love before God, and all this for His own pleasure. Truly then the house of God is a great and blessed reality. The reason perhaps why it is not better understood and enjoyed is our tendency to materialism. But when Scripture speaks of "the house of Israel," or "the house of David," we think immediately not of a material building or fine furniture but of living people. So ought we to think of the house of God.

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer is a truth commonly acknowledged, but often it is but little understood how we are transferred from Adam to Christ, so that created anew we are united to Christ and linked up with that world of glory of which He is the Head and Centre. We belong to a new race forming the family of God, and as His household are to be representative of Him in this world; but how could this be if we did not know Him?

God's presence is our home, and we are taken there with a nature and relationship suited to Him. Thus we have fellowship with the Father and the Son in the holy intimacy that belongs to the Divine nature the blessedness of which is beyond words to describe.

"O boundless grace! that fills with joy
Unmingled all that enter there,
God's nature, love without alloy,
Our hearts are given even now to share."