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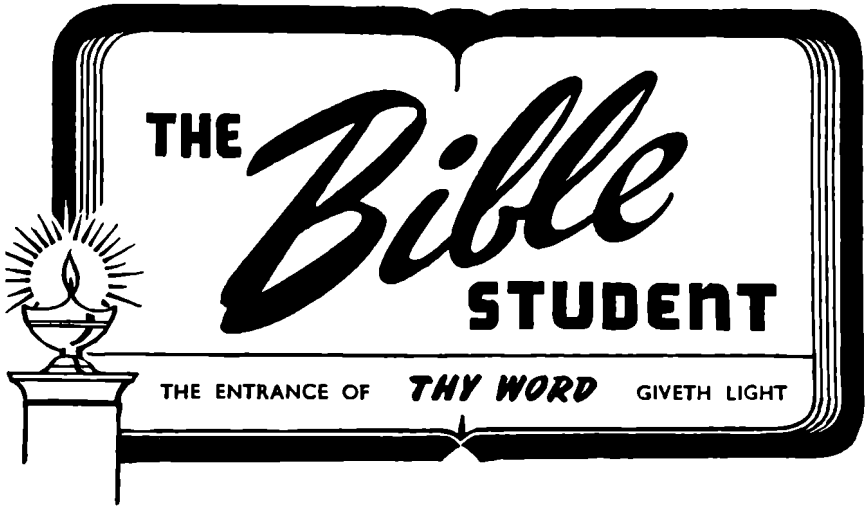
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New Series  
Vol. XXIV. No. 4

OCTOBER  
1953

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# THE PROGRESSIVE REVELATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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In the New Testament there seems to be, proceeding from the Gospel narrative and through the Epistles, a regular and systematic unfolding of the doctrine of the Spirit of God. I would indicate a few of the steps, or stages, in this development.

Starting with that emphatic declaration in John 16:7, 'It is expedient for you that I go away,' this is more than to say 'There will be a *compensation* for My absence,' for the word 'expedient' carries with it the idea of something *advantageous*. 'It is *better* for you that I go away, and that the Holy Spirit should come.' That seems almost incredible. But in view of our Lord saying, 'It is better for you that I go away,' we know that it could not be best to change places with the disciples of old and all their advantages, and yet, in the secret heart, there is a feeling that we would rather be as they; yet our Lord says there is a positive advantage in His withdrawal, because on His withdrawal depended the bestowal of the Holy Spirit.

Let us look at it still more closely. When the Lord Jesus Christ was upon earth, He was with some and not with others, with them at some times and not always, outside of them and not within them, but when the Holy Spirit came He was with all and not some, with them at all times, within them and not merely with them. Hence it is perfectly clear that it is better for us to be under the dispensation of the Spirit, than to have been among the actual company who met with Christ in the days of His flesh.

But more than that. In the 15th and 16th chapters of John are two words of great importance: 'The Spirit of truth shall TESTIFY of Me' (15:26). 'He shall GLORIFY Me' (16:14). The Holy Spirit is to witness to Christ, to testify to Him and of Him, and to glorify Christ. Notice what the two words mean. For all true knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ you are dependent upon the Spirit, and especially for such knowledge as glorifies Him in your eyes. The Spirit of God thus came into the world to testify of Christ, and so testify of Him as to make Him seem glorious in our eyes, 'chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely.' He is a necessity to the understanding of the true character of Christ, and for the blessed Son of God to become the actual centre of all things to us.

Paul tells the Corinthians, 'Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we Him no more.' This was not an expression of a disadvantage to be lamented, but rather as a better and greater privilege to know Christ through the spiritual comprehension than through the physical. Though it was a blessed thing to know Him after the flesh, it is more blessed to know Him by those senses of the spirit which, being exercised, discern between good and evil. It is greater to know Christ by the Holy Spirit than by the witness of the eyes and the ears and other personal contact.

I. Now if we turn to the Acts of the Apostles, this book is a kind of *biography* of the Holy Spirit, holding a somewhat similar relation to His person as the gospel narrative does to that of Christ. This book of the Acts begins with the Incarnation of the Spirit in the Church, and all through the history, which covers about the same period as the gospel—thirty-three and a half years, we trace the history of the working of the Holy Spirit within the Church. Again, the book of the Acts is intended to show the Holy Spirit in the believer becoming the power in all witnessing—the Governor and invisible Presiding guide. We see here His activity in the witnessing Church, as the disciples went through Judea and Samaria to the ends of the earth, bearing their testimony.

II. In the Epistle to the Romans, for the first time we meet the expression, 'the Spirit of Life,' in chap. 8, the centre of the whole epistle, literally and spiritually. The whole chapter is occupied with what may be called the development of life. The Holy Spirit is there represented as performing the *maternal* offices, bearing, nursing, rearing, and training the child of God, teaching us to walk and talk as a mother teaches her babe, and, like her, directing the *mind* to right objects of thought. The word 'Abba' is the Aramaic word for 'Papa'. Certain words need only the closed lips and the outgoing breath, when as yet there are no teeth, and so 'papa,' 'mamma,' are the natural beginnings of speech in the infant child. So the believer, under the Spirit's tuition, learns to talk in the dialect of the Spirit to the newly recognized Father, looking up and saying, 'Papa'. All through this chapter the Spirit is shown in these maternal offices, instilling life into the child, teaching him to walk and to talk, and directing the mind from carnal to spiritual things; and, just as

in the body there go on the mortifying and the vivifying processes, so we are told in this chapter that the New Life is developed by the mortification of sin on the one hand, and the vivification of the Spirit on the other, so that 'All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.'

III. Then, in Galatians, the great word there is *Walk*. 'Lusts' are ascribed to the Spirit. 'Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; for 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 (under the Spirit) the things that ye would' (under the control of the flesh). When 'lusts' are thus ascribed to the Spirit, there is no inconsistency or wrong in the term employed. What are lusts? they are the over-mastering desires of the flesh over the spirit of the man on the one hand, and the overmastering desires of the Spirit of God over the flesh on the other. The flesh lusts when it overmasters. By the 'expulsive power of a new affection' the Spirit overmasters the grosser passions. Dr Chalmers asked John, the coach-driver, why he whipped his leading horse when it seemed so unnecessary, and he replied, 'There is a great white stone just round the bend of the road there, and a deep crevasse on the other side, and this horse always shies; so I give him *something to think about till he gets past that stone*!' Chalmers went home and wrote that sermon on, 'The Expulsive Power of a New Affection'. Just so the Holy Spirit gives you something to love that makes you unlove what you once loved, and to love what you once did *not* love. He kindles in you overmastering affections, so that the inordinate affections of the flesh are subdued.

IV. Then, as in Galatians we are taught how the Spirit enables us to walk with a Heavenly Companion, so in the Epistle to the Ephesians we are taught how the Spirit lifts us to a fellowship in the 'heavenlies,' by our identification with Christ. In Christ we ascend above the earthly level, and actually live in the spiritual sphere, apart from the world, though we still have to be in it.

This Epistle to the Ephesians declares that every human being is either indwelt by the Spirit of Evil, or else by the Spirit of God (chap. 2:2, 3). 'And you, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this

world, according to the prince of the power of the air' (one of the names of the Devil), 'THE SPIRIT that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom also *we all had* our course of life in times past in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, *even as others.*' There are only *two* classes in God's eyes: 'the children of disobedience,' and 'the children of obedience,' and among the former 'we ALL had our conversation in times past'. Whatever may be the respectable gloss of a worldly life, that life is controlled by the Devil, and every man, controlled by the Spirit of God, is thus separated absolutely from those that are under the power of and controlled by the Evil One. The whole subject of the possession of human beings by the spirits of evil needs an entirely fresh examination. The Bible teaches that not only does the spirit of Evil dwell in every unconverted man, woman, or child, but that more than one evil spirit may dwell in such, for a *spirit* occupies no *space*. It is no mere figure of speech that out of Mary Magdalene were cast *seven* demons, or that a *legion* of demons were cast out of the Demoniac of Gadara and suffered to enter into the herd of swine. We see men sometimes commit crimes of which they seem really incapable; but if we believe that evil spirits dwell in men, then we can understand how they can carry out crimes and plans of evil, which they would have been personally unable to do otherwise.

The consummate triumph of Christ over the Devil was not when, in the Temptation He overcame him and he departed for a season, nor at the Cross and sepulchre, but when He sent down from Heaven the *Holy Spirit of God to dwell within every believing child of God*. Oh, what a triumph that is! The Holy Spirit coming into a sinful soul to depose and displace the spirits of evil. Even though there were seven or a legion of demons, the Spirit of God comes henceforth to be the dominating force over all others. Is not that Christ putting sin and Satan under His feet and under our feet too? Because *in Him* we triumph over the Devil and all his host. And so this Epistle to the Ephesians lifts us up to the heavenly level.

Again, notice that thus, in this Epistle, in which you have the most terrible presentation of the malice and malignity of the powers of evil, you are lifted up to the highest possible level of holy and blessed experience. In ch. 6:10 you have this warning: 'Finally,

my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil.' Remarkable! What have I to do with the wiles of the Devil, when I have not only received the Spirit of adoption, but have power to witness to Christ, been conscious of the Spirit's witness with my spirit, learnt the overmastering desires of the Spirit, been lifted up into a higher atmosphere, into blessed experience of communion and fellowship with my Lord? Ah, it is *that high* level where you are sure to meet the Devil in his mightiest power. As long as you are on the lower plane he is not going to give himself much trouble about you, for you are doing little harm to his kingdom; your own lusts are doing his work for him. But when you leave the lower behind, when the lusts of the flesh have been brought into subjection, when you have gone up yonder in the Spirit and are walking with Christ in the heavenlies, then you will find Satan to be your personal antagonist. I doubt whether we are ever clothed with the whole armour of God, in the sense of the 6th chapter of Ephesians, till we have mounted there into the heavenlies, where the most desperate form of encounter takes place: For when Satan sees you are endangering his kingdom, then, like a general-in-chief that sees his cause tottering, he will come himself against you in all his wiles. So that the more desperate your combats with the Devil are, the more you may be thankful that you are more or less endangering his kingdom. He lets us alone when we are captivated by the world and the flesh.

In the fourth chapter of the Second Corinthians some say we might translate: 'If our gospel be hid it is hid *by those things which are perishing*.' Young people go after the pleasures of this world, and when rebuked they say: 'We do not intend to follow them to any great extent; we know they will not give lasting satisfaction, but we mean to enjoy ourselves while we are young, and later on we will turn over a new leaf.' But did you ever see how men build an arch? They first of all put up scaffolding, and then a stone arch over the wooden structure; then when the stone arch is finished they tear down the wooden one and burn it up, but the *stone arch stands*. So these pleasures of this passing world, the vanity and the pomp of this life, are the wood-work, and by and by you will be sick of it all and pull the scaffolding down, *but the personal character you have been building will stand as long*

as God stands, eternally. So the Holy Spirit is seeking to draw you away from these things which perish, lest they give shape to eternal character.

We are within reach of a divine power that no man or woman from the time of Adam has ever more than begun to touch. When the people pressed upon the Lord Jesus, one woman so 'touched' Him that the Master felt the touch, and said, 'Some one hath touched ME, for virtue has gone out of ME.' The mere 'historical' or 'doctrinal' touch of Christ, is not *the* great 'touch' which brings virtue out of Christ; but if you get into true touch directly with Christ Himself, in a higher sense, you will have an experience of power, satisfaction, delight and fellowship with God that is absolutely new even to a child of God.

*A brief summary of the teaching about the Holy Spirit may be given as follows :*

- |         |  |                   |
|---------|--|-------------------|
| Christ  | 1. Born of the Spirit.   | —John 3 : 6.      |
|         | 2. The Spirit of truth <i>dwelleth with</i> you and <i>shall be in</i> you.  | —John 14 : 17.    |
|         | 3. <i>Receive</i> ye the Holy Spirit.  | —John 20 : 22.    |
| Paul    | 4. God <i>giveth</i> unto you His Holy Spirit.   | —1 Thess. 4 : 8.  |
|         | 5. Salvation through <i>sanctification</i> of the Spirit.  | —2 Thess. 2 : 13. |
|         | 6. God sent forth the Spirit of His Son <i>into our hearts</i> , crying Abba, Father.  | —Gal. 4 : 6.      |
|         | 7. Ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God <i>dwelleth in you</i> .  | —1 Cor. 3 : 16.   |
|         | 8. God <i>anointed</i> us, also <i>sealed</i> us, and gave us the <i>earnest</i> of the Spirit in our hearts.—2 Cor. 1 : 21, 22. |                   |
|         | 9. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus <i>made us free</i> .   | —Rom. 8 : 2.      |
|         | 10. Be <i>filled</i> with the Spirit.  | —Eph. 5 : 18.     |
|         | 11. We <i>worship</i> by the Spirit of God.  | —Phil. 3 : 3.     |
| Hebrews | 12. Made <i>partakers</i> of the Holy Spirit.  | —Heb. 6 : 4.      |
| James   | 13. The Spirit which He <i>made to dwell in us</i> .   | —Jas. 4 : 5.      |
| Peter   | 14. The Spirit of glory and of God <i>resteth upon you</i> .   | —1 Pet. 4 : 14.   |
|         | 15. Men spake from God, being <i>moved</i> by the Holy Spirit.   | —2 Pet. 1 : 21    |
| Jude    | 16. <i>Praying</i> in the Holy Spirit.   | —Jude 20.         |
| John    | 17. The Spirit which He hath <i>given</i> to us.—1 John 3 : 24.  |                   |
|         | 18. The Spirit that beareth witness (along with the water and the blood.)  | —1 John 5 : 6-9.  |