

*THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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My simple purpose in these lectures is to seek for a little clearer idea of the work of the Holy Spirit as we find that work described and referred to in the pages of the New Testament. In this lecture I will discuss

WHO THE HOLY SPIRIT IS.

Let us not go into the question of His personality or that of His relations to the other Persons of the Trinity. I take it for granted that we all accept the orthodox positions on these profound matters. My purpose now is to speak of the character of the Holy Spirit; and to show, if I can, that we can know what this character is. The very greatest practical difficulty that we have in understanding the work of the Holy Spirit, or in testing spiritual experiences and claims, is that our thoughts of Him are vague and uncertain. When we use or hear the name of Christ a definite and known character rises before the mind. All who hear that name see the same character. But when the name of the Holy Spirit is used no definite character is seen, or one sees one character and perhaps another sees something different. This may be true to some degree of every name, and especially of the great names of history and religion. But is it true of any other name quite to the same degree and extent as it is of the Holy Spirit?

This vagueness hangs over His work as it does over His character. It would help us to confess this over individual passages of Scripture. Take for instance that verse in Philipians in which the apostle gives the large

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continent outlines of the Christian religion: "For we are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." We know fairly well what the two last clauses in the verse mean. The publican in the parable is a picture and illustration of what it is to "have no confidence in the flesh": and we can see him as clearly as we can the character of John the Baptist. We also know what it means to "glory in Christ Jesus". Men who stand in His merits need no interpreter for that clause. But who will tell us definitely what the apostle meant by "worship by the Spirit of God"? Where is the parable that pictures that great feature of our religion? All manner of large differences are found in the explanations given, and where one is confident that he has the idea of the apostle he does not seem to be able to convince others. Take another passage of the same import: "Pray in or by the Spirit." What is the characteristic of this kind of praying which distinguishes it? Is it praying where we do not use outward forms of worship? Is it intenseness of spirit in prayer? Is it ecstatic praying? Or is it praying with feeling rather than praying merely with the intellect? Or, to go no further, does it refer to prayer in the name of Christ? And if you are certain in your own mind, do you know any way to convince others? I could take many other passages as altars on which we could confess the confusion and indefiniteness of our conceptions as to the work of the Holy Spirit. But we all feel the truth of what I am saying. Is there any way to come to clearness? I do not know. But it would certainly help us to understand His work the better if we could get a more definite knowledge of the character of the Spirit, if we could see Him as we do Christ.

THE NEW TESTAMENT CERTAINTY.

This indefiniteness did not characterize the New Testament Christians. The work of the Holy Spirit with

them was an experience rather than a doctrine. The knowledge of this experience was so clear and common amongst them that all that was needed in speaking or writing about it was merely to refer to it. No description or discriminating explanation was needed. All understood. When Peter told Jerusalem that Cornelius had received the Holy Spirit he gave the most overwhelming of all possible testimony and it was testimony not wholly acceptable to his brethren. But there were no questions raised. In such an issue a mere reference of that kind could not now settle the dispute. A thousand questions would be raised. But it settled it then: and this indicates how perfectly definite was the conception of the Holy Spirit at that time and how common amongst Christians was this knowledge. This accounts for the fact that the New Testament abounds in references to the Spirit and His work, and that there are no discriminating discussions of these subjects. Everyone understood the mere references. We could wish that some of them had fallen into doubt and confusion. Then the apostle would have given them and us light on many of the questions that have arisen since.

Our Lord in His promise of the Holy Spirit said that His disciples would know Him. In fact, He took for granted that they would know Him in most of the promises concerning the Spirit, but in one place He stated plainly that they would know Him: "Even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for he abideth with you and shall be in you." "Beholding" implies definite, differentiating knowledge. The first disciples certainly had this; but if we modern Christians have this clear knowledge, we at least need to be made to realize that we have it.

A NEW EXPERIENCE.

It will help us if we would recognize the fact that the experience of the Holy Spirit had its beginning with

Christianity. It began, so far as all but Christ Himself are concerned, with Pentecost. Before then it did not exist either in paganism, or in Judaism. For this we have the testimony of an apostle: On one occasion our Lord gave this promise: "He that believes on me, as said the Scripture, there shall flow out of his belly rivers of living waters." The Apostle John gave the following explanation of that promise: "But this he spake concerning the Spirit which they were about to receive who believed on him, for there was as yet no Spirit: for Jesus was not yet glorified." This does not, of course, mean that the Spirit was not in existence; nor, that He had not before that time done a religious work on men's minds and hearts. But it certainly does mean that the work henceforth by which the Spirit was to be known and which was to be His mark of distinction was a work that had not before existed. The Christian experience of the Holy Spirit was something new and to begin at Pentecost. This is borne out by all the promises of the Master to baptize His disciples on that occasion with the Spirit, and to bestow the gift of the Father. These promises all presuppose that the experience of Pentecost was new in human history and had no parallel in any other religion.

This is valuable because of what it excludes. For instance, it excludes ecstasy from any consideration as a distinguishing characteristic of the Holy Spirit. Religious ecstasy did not begin at Pentecost. We find it in Judaism from the days when King Saul fell down among the prophets until that day when old Simeon "came into the temple in the Spirit". Ecstasy also had a large place in pagan religions. I suppose this experience in which the spirit of man, seemingly possessed by a power other than self, supersedes the mental apparatus and takes possession of the man—this experience of ecstasy is as old, if not as universal, as religion itself. And because it is, because it did not begin at Pentecost, we cannot look on it as a distinguishing characteristic of the experience of

the Holy Spirit. But this is often done. There are those who think that there is no work of the Spirit apart from ecstasy; and that in its presence there are no other questions to be asked. And to think in this way is to identify Christianity with paganism; certainly, it does not lift it above Judaism. Ecstasy may accompany a work of the Holy Spirit. No one denies this. But it can accompany other spiritual experiences, worthy and unworthy. And on the other hand the experience of the Holy Spirit can be profound without ecstasy. We must look elsewhere if we would know Him whom Christ promised.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST.

We will come to a more definite conception of the Holy Spirit if we would always think of Him as the Spirit of Christ. And we can do this because our Savior identified, for all practical purposes, the Spirit with Himself. In His promise He said: "I will not leave you comfortless: I come to you." Evidently, He would come in the person of the Holy Spirit. To the same effect is the great promise of the commission: "And, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." I could quote other passages, and will later. But it is certain that the apostles believed that the Spirit whom they received at Pentecost was the Spirit of Jesus the Christ. When this is properly considered it sheds a very clear light on the character of the Holy Spirit.

One thing is certain. We all know Jesus. Some Christians can describe His character with greater accuracy and beauty of diction than others; but when it comes to knowing that character, the humblest of us feel that we have it so well formed in our minds that we can pass judgments on what others say about it; that we could recognize it anywhere on earth we might see it, in whatever garb it might appear, and that we can select traits of it in others. The greatest achievement that Chris-

tianity has accomplished in society is that it has made the character of Jesus common knowledge. Nothing it has ever done for this world has quite equaled this. And when we come to think about it, this is nothing less than a perfectly wonderful achievement.

Now I call your attention to this: The Christ that we know so well is the Christ whose life was lived under the power of the Holy Spirit. At His baptism our Lord received the Holy Spirit, who after that great experience abode with Him. Before His baptism, our Lord did not have the Holy Spirit in the same sense that He did afterward, else there would hardly have been a call to tell us of the coming of the Spirit upon Him at that time. Before His baptism He had lived in the beauty and purity of His own perfect manhood; and when we think of His life after baptism we are accustomed to think of it as going straight on without a real change. But evidently there was a change. Not a change which followed repentance and regeneration, for these could have no place in that divine life; but there was a change in spiritual elevation and power, and in all that went with these. The Scriptures very clearly indicate this change. What I am pointing out, is that the life of Jesus that we know is that life He lived under the power of the Spirit, for all of His life after baptism, every hour of it, was under that power. The life previous to His baptism we do not know. The apostles themselves knew very little of it. But from the hour He stood by John's side in the waters of the Jordan on through all His wondrous career and divine work, He had without measure the Holy Spirit and all He did He did under His inspiration and power. What, therefore, we see in Him was the Holy Spirit living and acting, in grace and in power.

That indeed was a unique life, unique in every way, in its relation to God, in its consciousness of the Father, in its devotion to the will of God, in its elevation above temporal concern, in its perfect confidence and trust, in

its moral seriousness and spiritual elevation, in its lowly charity and service, in its indifference to human greatness, in its heights above human distinctions, and in its grandeur in the presence of all duties, those duties that called on Him to rebuke sin, those that plead for mercy, and those that laid on Him the sins of others. This earth has never seen anything else that is quite so distinct as the character of our Lord. The highest snow-capped peak of the Himalayas does not stand out against the moonlit sky of night so distinctly as that character stands out against the dull background of this world's sin and littleness. And what I would impress is this. It is the character of the Holy Spirit in exactly the same sense as it is the character of Jesus. If it was Jesus who lived it and wrought it out, it was in the full measure of the Holy Spirit He lived and did His work. If He wrought through the Spirit, the Spirit wrought through Him. As we see that life and character we cannot separate the Lord from the Spirit. If, therefore, we know Jesus, our Lord, we also know the Holy Spirit.

THE PENTECOST EXPERIENCE.

This will help us a little the better to understand the Pentecost experience and other occasions when it is said the Spirit fell on men in wondrous power. It has been said that the characteristic thing of these occasions was the speaking with tongues. Without doubt this wonder occurred, especially at Pentecost; but to fix the mind on this is to miss what was essential and see only the transitory. At Pentecost it was the Spirit of Christ who came on men, the Spirit in whom He had lived His life and the one who had made that life what it was—it was this Spirit who now came to reproduce in men the Jesus type of life. That was the chief thing that happened on Pentecost.

Those hundred and twenty disciples were turned each in his measure into something that had an essential like-

ness to Jesus. It appeared in their faces, in their spiritual elevation and joy, in their consciousness of nearness to God, in their love for men and especially for one another. In a marvelous way Jesus had returned to the earth. The men who came running together could see it. They had seen Jesus and knew His life. His character and manners and methods were all familiar to them. They now saw that character or life reappearing. When Peter told them, and told them without one word of proof, that Jesus was at the right hand of God and that it was He who had poured forth this which they see and hear, they did not question it. They could not question it because of what they themselves saw with their own eyes. They could not doubt that what they saw came from Jesus. And, therefore, again, this helps us in our far-off time to realize that if we know Jesus we can know Him who comes from Jesus to reproduce His good life among men.

THE SPIRIT OF REDEMPTION.

It might be said that the character of Jesus has never been reproduced. In its fullness, it is true, and in certain of its features it has appeared but once on this earth. But of the disciples of Jesus it is said that men took note of them "that they had been with Jesus". A real likeness had certainly been reproduced, and this in men who were weak and sinful.

The Spirit that came on them came as a redemptive power that tended to transform them into the image of Jesus. As a redemptive power this Spirit produced the confession of sin, the sense of unworthiness, the sense of guilt and the sense of pardon. Now it might be claimed, in view of what I have said, that not one particle of this was in Jesus of Galilee. On the contrary, the most distinct feature of His character was its sinlessness; nor did His clear consciousness contain a trace of the sense of guilt or unworthiness. How then can it be claimed that

the Spirit who came on men at Pentecost was the Spirit of Him who wrought so marvelously in Galilee?

The Galilee life of our Lord was not the whole of His life, nor did it manifest the whole of His character and work for men. After Galilee came Calvary, and after Calvary the empty tomb and the throne. Our Savior died for men in a sacrificial offering; He arose for their justification, and ascended to intercede for them and reign over them. These great redemptive transactions for men were a part of His life, entered into the completion or perfection of His character and became a part of that character which He shed forth on men through His Spirit. We are told in many places that the Holy Spirit could not come until our Lord was glorified. Without pretending to familiarity with divine mysteries, we may say that if the Holy Spirit was to bring the whole of Christ's character and work to His disciples, the Holy Spirit could not come until that character and work were complete, having passed through all redemptive experiences.

But it is evident that if the Spirit of Christ brought the redemptive work of the Savior to men He would reproduce in their hearts that which accorded with this redemptive work as well as moral likeness to Jesus. Where the molten metal has passed from under the stamp and seal, on one side will be the image of the cross and on the other the face of our Lord. This image of the cross is another test by which men can know the Holy Spirit and supplements the test of the Galilee character.

In the epistles of the Apostle Paul the Holy Spirit is more identified with the redemptive work of Jesus than with His elevated character. But it must not be supposed that there is any separation between the two. The apostle simply looks primarily on the cross side of the seal. But it is well to consider this great apostle's point of view on this subject, for it is an advance on what may be called the character point of view.

With him the redeeming work of Christ was taken, one might say, as the body of which the Holy Spirit was

the soul, or rather the life imparting power. Let me try to make myself clearer: There are three standpoints from which we can look at the redeeming work of Christ. First, we can see it as a series of historical events and facts, namely, our Savior's death, resurrection, ascension, and reign. Secondly, we can look on this redeeming work from the standpoint of doctrine and see the atonement, justification, sanctification, and eternal life. But there is a third point of view. The redemptive work of Christ is more than a series of facts which happened in a far-off time; it is more than a body of doctrines. These facts and doctrines are looked on as a living whole, eternally present in the church and world, imparting their life and spirit to all who believe them. From this point of view they are the Holy Spirit, or rather the very body of the Holy Spirit, that in which the Spirit has become incarnate and whose grace He imparts to believers. This, as I interpret him, is the standpoint of the Apostle Paul. To him, the cross of Christ was the living Christ, ever abiding in the world and in the hearts of believers with grace and power.

I will recall a few passages in which this conception seems to obtain. In more than one place the apostle speaks of the Holy Spirit in us as the Spirit that raised Christ from the dead and as the power of the resurrection at work within us. He speaks in another place of our dying with Christ's death and being raised with Him. These are peculiar conceptions, but in his faith the redemptive facts were a kind of living body or reality, and the power of the Spirit was incarnated in them and imparted them to us. We live in them and they live in us. Again, the Apostle Paul calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Grace and speaks of grace as a living power at work within us. He thus so completely identified the Holy Spirit with the redemptive work of Christ that the two have interchangeable names. Again, Dr. Denney calls attention to the fact that in the New Testament the whole

of the gospel of grace in us is referred to as the work of faith and also the whole of it is referred to as the work of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:5 and 2 Thess. 2:13). Faith is not one half and the Spirit the other. But each is synonymous with the whole gospel of grace. That is, this gospel looked at as something men must appropriate, is called faith; but looked at from the divine side, as the power by which this world is to be saved, it is the Holy Spirit. Here, again, the gospel of grace is the body, of which the Holy Spirit is the living power. And, again, the fruit of the cross and the fruit of the Spirit are identically one and the same in every particular. They are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, etc. It is the cross as a living reality in our hearts that produces these. But this is another way of saying that the Holy Spirit is the cross incarnated. When we see the cross we see Him. To be moved by it is to be moved by Him. In these passages, and more that I could recall, the great Apostle of the Cross so associates the Holy Spirit with the redemptive work of Christ as to make the two one. In that work, considered as a living unity, the Spirit makes His abode and in the Spirit that work becomes a transforming power in the hearts of men.

The simple point that I now make is that we can know the Spirit because we can know that work. We know what the effect of that work is on the man who believes it; we know what kind of feelings it inspires; we know what kind of worship it produces; we know its type of life among men; we know its humility before God; in short, we know the cross of Christ when we see it transferred to a human life; and because we do, we can know the Holy Spirit.

In conclusion, let me gather up what I have tried to say. I have pointed out first that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus and reproduces His type of life and can now be known because we know that type of life: and then I have at length tried to show that in the epistles of

Paul He is identified with our Lord's redemptive work. (In the writings of the Apostle John, as we will see in the third lecture, He is identified with the risen and reigning Christ.) But I want you to feel that there is no conflict here.

One might say, "Of course, there is no conflict", and amplify his "of course" after this manner: "That the Holy Spirit was in Jesus and imparts His life, was in redemption and imparts its spirit; and also that He was in Mohammed and imparts all that is true in that religion; that the Holy Spirit is in science, in all movements for humanity, and in all that is true and beautiful wherever it can be found." Such a statement may have a grain of truth; but it certainly misses all I have been talking about this morning. If the Holy Spirit was *incarnated* in Jesus, He was not also in something else. When the Holy Spirit took Christ and Christ's work as the body in which He would forever make His abode, He limited Himself to that sphere as certainly as the Second Person of the Trinity limited Himself when He became incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth. Henceforth and forever what He did for other things could be done for them only as they are related to Christ and His redemption. If the Holy Spirit is incarnated in Christ and Christ's redemption, we cannot know Him anywhere else or in any other way than as we see that character and that redemption reproduced. But I have almost digressed. Let me return.

What I was saying is, that there is no conflict between the Holy Spirit's being incarnated in Christ and His being incarnated in Christ's redemptive work, and this is true because there is no difference between Christ and His redemptive work. Both are imparted in the one work of the Spirit; and it is by sharing in the redemptive work that men come to the likeness of that character which otherwise would be their despair. Here is the paradox of the Christian heart. It would seem that when the Spirit of the cross was imparted to a man he could have nothing but a sense of sin and would ever afterward

“stand afar off and beat upon his breast”. But as a matter of fact, when the cross of Christ takes its place in a man’s life, he indeed has a sense of sin, but he also goes down to his house justified. And this consciousness of restored fellowship with God, without taking away his altar unworthiness, enables him, in his measure, to live as Jesus did, with something of His fellowship with God. And of His devotion to God’s Kingdom. It is this two-fold kind of life, and not some other, whatever the other may be, that is of the Holy Spirit. “Hereby know we the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”