

The Spirit of Love

by Andrew Murray

The Spirit of God is the Love of God come down to us, and we must believe and rejoice in it, yielding ourselves to it as a Divine fire consuming the sacrifice and lifting it heavenward.

Scripture: John 13:34, Romans 15:30, Galatians 5:22, Colossians 1:8

Topics: "Discipleship", "The Love of the Spirit"

Description

Andrew Murray emphasizes that the Spirit of God is fundamentally the Divine Love that dwells within believers, asserting that true love is the primary evidence of the Spirit's presence in our lives. He explains that love is not merely one of the graces of the Spirit but the essence of God Himself, and that believers must yield to the Spirit to overcome selfishness and embody Christlike love. Murray highlights the importance of denying self to allow the Spirit's love to flow through us, which is essential for genuine discipleship. He calls for a deeper understanding of the Spirit's role in our lives, urging Christians to recognize and cultivate the love that has been poured into their hearts through the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, he prays for believers to be filled with this love, which is the true mark of a follower of Christ.

Transcript

The fruit of the Spirit is love.'-Gal 5:22. I beseech you by the love of the Spirit.' -Rom. 15:30. Who also declared unto us your love in the spirit, Col.1:8

Our subject today leads us up into the very centre of the inner sanctuary. We are to think of the Love of the Spirit. We shall have to learn that love is not only one, among others, of the graces of the Spirit, is not only the chief among them, but that the Spirit is indeed nothing less than the Divine Love itself come down to dwell in us, and that we have only so much of the Spirit as we have of Love.

God is a Spirit: God Is Love. In these two words we have the only attempt that Scripture makes to give us, in human language, what may be called a definition of God.' As a Spirit, He has life in Himself, is independent of all around Him, and has power over all to enter into it, to penetrate it with His own life, to communicate Himself to it. It is through the Spirit that God is the Father of Christ, the Father of spirits, that He is the God of creation, that He is the God and Redeemer of man. All life is owing to the Spirit of God. And it is so because God is Love. Within Himself He is Love, as seen in the Father giving all He hath to the Son, and the Son seeking all He has in the Father. In this life of Love between the Father and the Son' the Spirit is the bond of fellowship. The Father is the Loving One, the Fountain; the Son the Beloved One, the great Reservoir of Love, ever receiving and ever giving back; the Spirit the Living Love that makes

them one. In Him the Divine Life of Love hath its ceaseless flow and overflowing. It is that same love with which the -Father loves the Son that rests on us and seeks to fill us too, and it is through the Spirit that this Love of God is revealed and communicated to us. In Jesus it was the Spirit that led Him to the work of love for which He was anointed, to preach glad tidings to the poor and deliverance to the captives ; through that same Spirit He offered Himself a sacrifice for us. The Spirit comes to us freighted with all the love of God and of Jesus : the Spirit is the Love of God.

And when that Spirit enters us, His first work is: 'The love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which was given unto us.' What He gives is not only the faith or the experience of how greatly God loves, but something infinitely more glorious. The Love of God, as a spiritual existence, as a Living Power, enters our hearts. It cannot be otherwise, for the Love of God exists in the Spirit; the outpouring of the Spirit is the inpouring of Love. This Love now possesses the heart: that one same Love with which God loves Jesus, and ourselves, and all His children, and which overflows to all the world, is within us, and is, if we know it, and trust it, and give up to it, the power for us to live in too. The Spirit is the Life of the Love of God; the Spirit in us is the Love of God taking up abode within us.

Such is the relation between the Spirit and the Love of God; let us now consider the relation between our spirit and love. We must here again refer to what has been said of man's threefold nature, body, soul, and spirit, as constituted in creation and disorganized by the fall.' We saw how the soul, as the seat of self-consciousness, was to be subject to the spirit, the seat of the God consciousness. And how sin was simply self assertion, the soul refusing the rule of the spirit to gratify itself in the lust of the body. The fruit of that sin was that self ascended the throne of the soul, to rule there instead of God in the spirit. Selfishness thus became the ruling power in man's life. The self that had refused God His right at once refused fellow-man his due, and the terrible story of sin in the world is simply the history of the origin, the growth, the power, the reign of self. And it is only when the original order is restored when the soul gives the spirit the precedence it claims, and self is denied to make way for God, that selfishness will be conquered, and love toward our brother flow from love toward God. In other words, as the renewed spirit becomes the abode of the Spirit of God and His love, and as the regenerate man yields himself to let the Spirit have sole sway, that love will again become our life and our joy. To every disciple the Master says here again, 'Let him deny self and follow me.' Many a one has sought in vain to follow Jesus in His life of love, and could not, because he neglected what was so indispensable denying self. Self following Jesus always fails, because it cannot love as He loves.

If we understand this, we are prepared to admit the claim that Jesus makes, and that the world makes too, that our proof of discipleship is to be Love. The change we profess to have undergone is so Divine, the deliverance from the power of self and sin so complete, the indwelling of the Spirit of God's love is so real and true, and the provision made to enable us thus to live so sufficient, that love, or the new commandment, as the fulfilling of the law, ought to be the natural overflow of the new life in every believer. That it is not so is simply another proof of how little believers understand their calling to walk after the Spirit, really to be spiritual men. All the complaints that are continually being made by ourselves, or those around us, of tempers unconquered and of selfishness prevailing, of harsh judgments and unkind words, of the want of a Christlike meekness and patience and gentleness, of the little that is really being done by the majority of Christians in the way of self-sacrifice for the social and religious needs of the perishing around them,-all this is simply the proof that it has not yet been understood that to be a Christian just means to have the Spirit of Christ; just means to have His Love, to have been made by Him a fountain of Love springing up and flowing out in streams of living water. We know not what the Spirit is meant to be in

us, because we have not accepted Him for what the Master gave. We are more carnal than spiritual.

It was thus with the Corinthians. In them we see the remarkable phenomenon of a Church, 'in everything enriched in Christ, in all utterance, and all knowledge, coming behind in no gift,' abounding in everything in faith, and utterance, and knowledge,' and yet so sadly wanting in love. 'Whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal?' The sad spectacle teaches us how, under the first movings of the Holy Spirit, the natural powers of the soul, knowledge, faith, utterance, may be mightily affected, without self yet being entirely surrendered ; and how thus many of the gifts of the Spirit may be seen, while the chief of all, Love, is sadly wanting. It teaches us how to be truly spiritual. It is not enough for the Spirit to take hold of these natural soul-endowments and rouse them to exercise in God's service. Something more is needed. He has entered the soul, that through it He may obtain a fixed and undivided sway in soul and spirit both, that with self deposed God may reign. And the token that self is deposed and that God does reign will be Love ; the surrender and the power to count nothing Life but Love, a life in the love of the Spirit.

Not very different was the state of the Galatians, to whom the words, 'The fruit of the Spirit is Love,' were addressed. Though their error was not that of the Corinthians, boasting of gifts and knowledge, but a seeking after and trusting in carnal observances and ordinances, the result was in both the same-the Spirit's full dominion was not accepted in the inner life of love, and so the flesh ruled in them, causing bitterness and envy and enmity. (Gal.5:15,16, 25, 26.) And even so it is still in much of what bears the name of the Christian Church. On the one hand the trust in gifts and knowledge, in soundness of creed and earnestness of work, on the other the satisfaction in forms and services, leaves the flesh in full vigour, not crucified with Christ, and so the Spirit is not free to work out true holiness or a life in the power of Christ's love. Oh, do let us learn the lesson, and pray God very fervently to teach it to His people, that a Church or a Christian professing to have the Holy Spirit must prove it in the first place by the exhibition of a Christlike love. Both in its gentleness in bearing wrong, and in its life of self-sacrifice to overcome the wrong, and to save all who are under its power, the life of Christ must be repeated in His members. The Spirit is indeed the Love of God come down to us.'

As searching and solemn as this truth is in this aspect, so comforting and encouraging is it in another. The Spirit is the Love of God come down to us. Then we have that love within our reach; it is indeed dwelling within us. Since the day when, in believing, we were sealed with the Holy Ghost, the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts. 'The love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts, through the Holy Ghost which was given unto us.' Though there may have been little to see of it in our lives, though we ourselves have hardly felt or known it, though the blessing has been unrecognised, there it was; with the Holy Spirit came down the Love of God into our hearts; the two could never be separated. And if we would now come to the experience of the blessing, we must just begin by a very simple faith in what the word says. The word is Spiritbreathed, the Divinely-prepared organ through which the Spirit reveals what He is and does. As we take that word as Divine Truth, the Spirit will make it Truth in us. Let us believe that the Holy Spirit, possessor and bearer to us of all God's Love, has been within our heart with all that Love ever since we became God's children. Because the veil of the flesh has never been rent in us, the outstreaming and power of that Love has been but feeble, and hidden from our consciousness. Let us believe that He dwells within us, to reveal as the Power of our Life, the Love of God in our hearts.

In this faith, that the Love-shedding Spirit is within us, let us look up to the Father in earnest prayer, to plead for His mighty working in our inner man, that Christ may dwell in our hearts, that we may be rooted and grounded in love, that our whole life may have its strength and nourishment in love. As the answer

comes, the Spirit will first reveal to us the Love of God, the Love of the Father to Christ as His Love to us, the Love of Christ to us, the same with which the Father loved Him. Through the same Spirit this love then rises and returns to its Source, as our love to God and Christ. And because that Spirit has revealed that same love to all God's children around us, our experience of it as coming from God, or returning up to God, is ever one with love to the brethren. Just as the water descending in rain, and flowing out as fountains or streams, and rising up to heaven again as vapour, is all one, so the Love of God in its threefold form; His Love to us, our love to Him, and the love to each other as brethren. The Love of God is within thee by the Holy Spirit: believe it, and rejoice in it ; yield thyself to it as a Divine fire consuming the sacrifice and lifting it heavenward: exercise and practise it in intercourse with every one on earth. Then thou shalt understand and prove that the Spirit of God is the Love of God.

Blessed Lord Jesus! in holy reverence I bow before Thee as Love Incarnate. The Father's love gave Thee. Thy coming was a mission of Love. Thy whole life was Love; Thy death its Divine seal. The one commandment Thou gavest Thy disciples was Love. Thy one prayer before the throne is that Thy disciples may be one, as Thou with the Father, and that His Love may be in them. The one chief trait of Thy likeness Thou longest to see in us is, that we love even as Thou lovest. The one irresistible proof to the world of Thy Divine mission will be the love of Thy disciples to each other. And the Spirit that comes from Thee to us is the very Spirit of Thy self -sacrificing love, teaching Thy saints to live and die for others, as Thou didst.

Holy Lord Jesus! look upon Thy Church, look upon our hearts. And wherever Thou seest that there is not love like Thine, oh, make haste and deliver Thy saints from all that is still selfish and unloving ' Teach them to yield that self, which cannot love, to the accursed cross, to await the fate it deserves. Teach us to believe that we can love, because the Holy Spirit hath been given us. Teach us to begin to love and serve, to sacrifice self and live for others, that love in action may learn its power, may be increased and perfected. Oh, teach us to believe that because Thou livest in us, Thy love is in us too, and we can love as Thou dost. Lord Jesus, Thou Love of God! Thine own Spirit is within us; oh, let Him break through, and fill our whole life with love. Amen.

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