

The Work of the Indwelling Spirit

by C.I. Scofield

The indwelling Spirit is the source of victory over the flesh, Christian character, discernment of truth, and the renewal and nourishment of spiritual life.

Scripture: John 15:5, Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Galatians 5:16, Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 3:16

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Sanctification"

Description

C.I. Scofield preaches about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers, emphasizing that the Spirit's presence in our bodies makes them temples of God, sanctified and set apart. He discusses the internal struggle between the old self-life and the new divine nature, illustrating the phases of Christian experience through the contrasting chapters of Romans 7 and 8. Scofield highlights the importance of walking in the Spirit to overcome the flesh and experience victory, emphasizing that true Christian character and virtues like love, joy, and peace are produced by the Spirit's work within us. He stresses the need for spiritual discernment, renewal, and nourishment by the Spirit to live a vibrant and effective Christian life.

Transcript

We continue this evening the subject of the Holy Spirit. You will remember that we saw very clearly from the Word of God that if we are believers on the Lord Christ the Spirit of God dwells in our mortal bodies. It is a very beginning of days when a Christian really accepts that fact. When, instead of seeking the Spirit, we believe that He is already within.

And you will remember that we had begun to look together at the purposes of His indwelling--the work He seeks to do, and that we found as a primary result of His indwelling that the body becomes a temple. We speak sometimes of meeting houses as sacred places because they have been set apart for holy uses, but, ah, how infinitely more holy and sacred is this wonderful temple of the body by reason of the fact that the Holy Spirit dwells in it. You know that when Solomon's temple was built it was given over to God. The ark was brought into the most holy place, and then the priests went out, and the glory of the Lord filled the house, and from that moment it was a temple. It was a temple in intent and purpose all the while Solomon was building it, but when God by the Shekinah glory took possession of it, then it became God's temple.

Well that is just true of us, dear friends, of these bodies of ours only in a far more wonderful sense, for God Himself dwells in these temples by His Spirit. It is a serious fact.

And next I ask you to note that the Spirit indwells the believer to give victory over the flesh, and oh, dear friends, how important that is. The old self life is there; the old Adam nature is there. In a very real sense the believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, who has been born of the Spirit and made a partaker of the divine nature, is two persons. More accurately he has within his one personality two natures. The divine nature imparted by the Spirit of God in the new birth and the old Adam nature. You will remember how, in an experimental way, this is brought out by the seventh chapter of Romans. There you have a renewed man, a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ; a justified believer, and knowing himself to be such, but he is destitute of either rest or victory. He is in constant inner strife, and his experience is one of constant defeat. It is one of the saddest and most tragic passages of the Word of God, and yet one is constrained to believe that it describes an average Christian experience. But the seventh of Romans is immediately followed by the eighth, and there the same man gives us quite a different aspect of Christian life and Christian experience. Indeed, the great apostle to the Gentiles illustrates in himself the only three possible phases of religious and Christian experience. First, as a Jew, he was a very religious man, intensely religious, working day and night at his religion: far more zealous in the religion of his fathers than many of his equals in his own nation, profiting more in it than they,-- intensely religious, perfectly self-satisfied--but lost.

And then he met Jesus on the way to Damascus and was saved, and then he was miserable, for, as we discover by the seventh of Romans, he was trying to go on as a Christian under the law, and that is always misery, and always defeat.

And then Paul passed into a third phase of experience, of which Romans.viii:2 is the expression: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The conflict of the seventh of Romans had passed into victory--not by the method of law-works and self-determination, but by the power of the Spirit indwelling him.

Now, I believe that the professing church illustrates continually these three phases of experience. Hosts are in Paul's first state; religious churchgoers, church members. They are very diligent in the outward things of religion, and they are quite contented with themselves, but when you speak of inward struggles or any vital Christian experience, they wonder what you are talking about.

I was preaching once on Romans vii:18, where the apostle, going back in his experience, tells of the time when to will was present with him, but how to perform that which was good he found not.

One of my hearers came to me when the sermon was ended and said, "I cannot understand what was the matter with Paul. Why, it seems the easiest thing in the world to be good. I don't have any difficulty about being good." I asked my friend--a very faithful church member--what he thought the apostle Paul meant by being good. "Why," said he, "to be honest, pay your debts, be kind to your family, abstain from worldly amusements, stay away from theatres, and let cards alone, and that kind of thing." Said he, "I don't find any difficulty in that."

"Now," I answered, "let me give you my idea of what Paul meant," and I turned to some of the exhortations of the epistles concerning the Christian walk. I turned back to the beatitudes, "Blessed are the meek." I said, "Did you ever try to be meek?" Well, he could not say that he ever had. Didn't know that he admired meekness especially.

"Well," said I, "that is just it. You try to be meek once, and you will soon come upon Paul's difficulty. You can act meekly, of course, for awhile, until somebody angers you, or something arouses your pride. What the Apostle Paul agonized for was to be the beatitudes, and he could not accomplish it, though he was

saved, a justified man.

Then, other multitudes, like Paul in the seventh of Romans, are saved but without victory over the self-life, striving to please God by law-works, and to get peace of conscience by religiousness. They are like Israel in the wilderness, restless, murmuring, often lusting after the things of Egypt, and, finally, a few, knowing the blessed purpose and power of the indwelling Spirit, quietly reckon upon Him for victory.

Some one said, "I hear a great deal of talk about the Pope of Rome, but the pope who troubles me most is Pope Myself." Oh, dear friends, that is it, the real enemy is in us. When conscience, under the searchlight of Scripture, accuses us of failure, we straightway blame Satan. But read Mark vii:20-23, and remember that all that is latent within.

I beg you to note the apostle's secret of victory. He opens the secret to us at once: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The law of sin which is in his members, the law of death written and engraved in stones. The man is delivered. He is made free. By what? By new resolutions? By more prayer? By getting up earlier in the morning, and keeping the morning watch? Oh, he had gone through all that kind of thing when he was a Jew. What he wants is reality now, and he has got reality. Now a new law, a new power, a new enablement has come in and delivered the man; that is what he is telling us. And then he was working so hard in the seventh of Romans to perfect a character which God could approve, and now he finds the wonderful truth--the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in (not by) those who walk not after the law but after the Spirit; and so it goes on, one continuous shout of victory from the beginning to the end of the chapter, all based on the perfect work of Christ, but made into actual experience by the Holy Spirit dwelling in the believer.

Turn upon that point to one other passage, the fifth of Galatians, sixteenth and seventeenth verses: "This I say, then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." Why? "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." The omnipotent Spirit of God dwelling in the believer and the flesh in the believer are contrary the one to the other, but the Spirit has power, as we walk in Him, perfectly to keep in the place of death the deeds of the body, the flesh and its motions. So that we are utterly without excuse if we are saying: "Well, I was angry this morning, but I am naturally high-tempered, but it is just a flash, and it is all over; I am not one of those who hold malice." Oh, yes, it is just a flash, as you turn on your doorstep to go to work in the morning, and your wife suffers over it all day long, and you let yourself off by pleading your nature. God help you!

Observe, it is not you and the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit. He does not ask any of your help in that. He asks only one thing, that you shall walk in Him. Now what is it to walk in the Spirit? Why, it is to walk in yieldedness to the Spirit.

You read that Jesus returned in the Spirit unto Galilee. He had, so far as we know, nothing to do that day but take a walk; but He was "in the Spirit"--a Spirit-guided Man that day. All His whole nature and being were consciously yielded up to the control of the Spirit. That is walking in the Spirit. Now here is an imperative promise: "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." It is one of the divine imperatives. Ye shall not. God means that. And then He explains why ye shall not: "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 may not do the things that ye would."

Oh, what a wonderful, wonderful office! What a wonderful privilege! The strife goes on, but it is the Spirit against the flesh. Omnipotence against the old Adam nature, and you, the new man, are out of the conflict,

and in peace, and you are asked to do but one thing--walk in yieldedness to Him. What a privilege! What a marvelous privilege!

I would say again, that the Spirit of God dwells in the believer to produce that thing that we hear so much--if you will allow me to so put it--twaddle about--Christian character. It is the great talk of the modern preachers-- character, character, character. One gets tired of the word. One feels some sense of relief that the word is not in the Bible. We are to be saved by character, we are to make character, and to build character.

I suppose the idea is that we are to practice sedulously some grace of the Christian life until it has become a kind of habit, and then we take up another, and build up, at last, a complete character. That is the seventh of Romans again.

What of Christian character? How does it come? Let me read (Galatians v:22,23).

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness" (ah, it is possible then to be meek!), "temperance. Against such there is no law."

There are the nine beautiful elements of real Christian character, and how are they produced? "The fruit of the Spirit." It carries one back in thought to our Lord's vital presentation, that intensely vital presentation of the great truth of our oneness with Him. "I am the vine, ye are the branches." "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." How does the branch bear fruit? It has no roots of its own, but because it is in the vine the life energies of the vine fill the branch and it grows, and blossoms, and at last there come the rich clusters of grapes, and the energy of the vine in the branch has produced that. The branch has not been worried over the fruit bearing. The branch has done nothing in the world but just abide in the vine. That is all.

These are the fruits; these are the graces which are not possible to be produced by any manner of self-effort. By no manner of effort can you make yourself loving, by no manner of effort can you ever have peace; no mere will power will ever make you longsuffering. Nothing will give you gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, but the Spirit of God.

The Spirit of God by His own power and energy produces these things in the believer who walks in the Spirit, and the believer who walks in the Spirit rests on the divine imperative that he shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

Then the Spirit gives discernment of truth. I will read you just one passage, i Corinthians, second chapter: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God:for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," and therefore I do not care how learned in the learning of mankind any theologian or critic may be, if he without renewal and without spirituality is examining the word of God I will just ask him to please let me pass on and not take my time, because it is impossible for him to help me, and his authority as a critic, a scholar, I thank God, does not awe me. I would just as soon think of reading a long book about the color of a rose, written by a blind man who had never seen a rose, as I would a long criticism upon the Bible by a mere professional professor in some theological school; but now observe, "He that is spiritual discerneth all things."

Oh, that is it. It is by the Spirit that the truth of God is made actual to us, and ceases to be to us a dead word, and becomes to us the living word, which it surely is, the Spirit Himself marvelously interpreting it.

Now I beg you to note most carefully that another classification comes in here: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ" (1 Cor. iii:1).

And they were Christians, and the Spirit was dwelling in them! But, dear friends, the Spirit indwelling is not a mechanical thing. Do not imagine that because you can take by faith unhesitatingly the fact that the Spirit does dwell in you that therefore you are of necessity spiritual. You may be very carnal. You may be grieving the Spirit and quenching the Spirit every conscious moment of your lives! It is the fact that you are yielding to the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, the Spirit having His sovereign way within, that makes the believer spiritual. Then, one may have a great deal of knowledge, and only be puffed up by it, and one may have very little knowledge, and yet be very spiritual, and, in the sphere of his capacity, very helpful in the things of God. For it is too often true that "knowledge puffeth up, love buildeth up."

Then, finally,--and with this I shall release you--that it is the Spirit who renews and nourishes the spiritual life.

Look at our Lord's beautiful figure in the fourth chapter of John's Gospel, "Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a fountain (not a well; the contrast is between Jacob's well and a fountain of water springing up) springing up into everlasting life."

But what a picture of renewal, what a picture of vitality; what a figure of vigor and freshness in the inner life. I believe that the great trouble with Christian people to-day is what might be called "low vitality." They have life, but they have not the life more abundantly.

I remember going once with a friend to speak a little to some poor weak ones who were in a convalescent home near London. And this friend said, "Won't you go out there and speak to those poor ones? They are very weak, and you must give them milk. They cannot concentrate their minds very well, but do come and just give them a little simple word; it may be a blessing to them."

I was never in a place where my heart was more touched, and yet, remember, all those people there had been discharged by the doctor. They were all pronounced cured, or they could not be there, but there was something so pathetic in the weakness and irritability and lack of power of those poor people.

Why, as I look at the present day church statistics, it seems to me that many of them are little more than convalescent retreats. They have life, perhaps. They have had the touch of the Great Physician, but how ineffective they are. How unable they are to go on with anything in the work of the Lord. How little they apprehend even the possibilities that lie latent in Christian life. What do they need? They need to be drinking at the fountain. They need to be filled. What a picture of renewal that is. If a fountain is to be upspringing it must continually be fed from a source higher than itself, and the inlet must be kept open, and the outlet must be kept open, and then the fountain sends forth its crystal waters, and in its way sings a song of praise to God.

The water is there, but the difficulty is that the inlet and the outlet are both very much obstructed. We are obstructing the inlet when we grieve the Spirit of God, and we certainly obstruct the outlet when we quench the Spirit of God.

But there He is with all these possibilities of glorious and abundant life within. It is not power for service that I am speaking of now. That you get in the seventh chapter of John, the outflowing rivers of living

water. It is the inner life which is before the mind of the Lord Jesus here when He speaks of the upspringing fountain of living water; or in Paul's phrase, "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man."

Oh, there is the great arena where all spiritual victories must be gained. We hear so much to-day about power for service, and we are told to be "seeking" power for service.

Why, read the fourteen Epistles of Paul, and note that he never tells the believer to seek power for service--a strange omission, if these brethren are right. Not one single exhortation or command to seek the baptism of the Spirit or to seek power in all these Epistles. The power is waiting for us, but what we have here is not power; it is the inner life,--strengthened with might by His spirit in the inner man.

Now let us think of it, dear friends, just a little personally. The Spirit of God, with all these precious possibilities, latent in the fact, dwells in you and me. We may walk in victory-- are we walking in victory? We may be faithful -- are we faithful?

Have you noticed--and this is the last word--that in that parable of the vine and the branches there are three degrees of fruit-bearing? "Fruit," "more fruit," "much fruit," and never until we reach much fruit do we glorify the Father. "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit." Oh, the religious world can imitate a poor little sort of fruit-bearing. Anyone can do the convenient things. There are a great many nice people in the world, but they cannot be holy. It is impossible. The world cannot be spiritual, but we may, and we may produce those lovely graces which are the fruit of the Spirit, refreshing to ourselves and a testimony unanswerable to all who know us.

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