

Semi-Spiritual Christians

by Daniel Steele

Daniel Steele's sermon addresses the condition of semi-spiritual Christians and emphasizes the need for a deeper experience of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Scripture: Genesis 1:14

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Sanctification"

Description

Daniel Steele preaches about the importance of progressing from a state of spiritual twilight to experiencing the fullness of the Holy Spirit, emphasizing the need for a deeper work of sanctification beyond conversion. He highlights the spiritual blindness and weakness that many Christians face, urging believers to seek a conscious abiding presence of the Sanctifier and a closer union with Christ. Steele encourages unwavering faith, surrender, and reliance on the testimony of those who have experienced the fullness of God's love and power.

Transcript

These are not nominal Christians so plentiful in every community, who by some misfortune became church members before they were born again, or who began in the spirit, but ended in the flesh, after running well for a season. Gal. 3:3. For it is a misfortune for the vine to have a fruitless branch, and to the dry branch itself to be in a position where it must be inevitably cut off and cast into the fire. We speak of a very large class of disciples who live in the twilight instead of the cloudless sunshine, who are in the condition of the world before the fourth day, when the sun was created.

Gen. 1:14-19. As there was phosphorescence before the king of day poured his full light upon creation, so there is a degree of spiritual illumination before the Holy Ghost in full-orbed splendor rises upon the believing soul. We can never mingle with these Christians without commiserating their condition. They see just enough to be afraid. In a mist everything has a ghostly, spectral, terrific look. They are perplexed with doubts and harassed with fears. They are in the pre-pentecostal state of weakness and blindness.

There was slight spiritual illumination enjoyed by the disciples before the glorified Lord Jesus sent down the Comforter. They saw men as trees walking, as did the half-cured blind man after Jesus had wrought an imperfect work upon him; for the perfect Jesus heals souls by stages, as he did this man's eyes, just in accordance with their faith. Mark 8:24. The chief objections to the "higher life," or the conscious abiding presence of the Sanctifier, come not from the totally darkened worldling, whether within the church or without, but from these good people whose perceptions of Christian truth respecting the extent of gospel

salvation under the new covenant are sadly distorted by their spiritual ophthalmia.

How clearly the apostles and the Jerusalem church-members saw, after their souls became the habitation of God through the Spirit! Eph. 2:22. What a rending away of the veil of Jewish prejudices! What a clear spiritual insight to read with ease what had before been enigmatical and dark! How the Scriptures opened beneath their gaze, the Spirit rendering the dark passages transparent, and uncovering mines of richest treasure in the open fields which they had trodden a thousand times before!

But was not all that miraculous and exceptional, designed to give Christianity a good start, but never to be repeated after the apostolic age? "The day of Pentecost was a pattern day; all the days of this dispensation should have been like it, should have exceeded it! But, alas! the church has fallen down to the state in which it was before this blessing had been bestowed, and it is necessary to ask Christ to begin over again. We, of course, in respect to knowledge --intellectual knowledge of spiritual things -- are far in advance of the point where the disciples were before Pentecost.

But it should be borne in mind that when truths have once been revealed and made a part of orthodoxy, the holding of them does not necessarily imply an operation of the Spirit of God. We deceive ourselves doubtless in this way, imagining that because we have the whole Scriptures, and are conversant with all its great truths, the Spirit of God is necessarily working in us. We need a baptism of the Spirit as much as the apostles did at the time of Christ's resurrection." [Love Revealed; Bowen.]

It would be a blessed day which should witness the descent of the Holy Ghost anew upon the whole Christian church. But to ask for this would be to ask for uncovenanted grace. For the majority of Christians are not in a receptive condition. Vessels must be emptied of earth before they can be filled with gold. There must be an intense thirst before Jesus will give these living waters. Even then there must be an unwavering faith, grasping the following truths --

1. That the Spirit of Promise, the Comforter, is a person who has a work to do in your soul, after justification, anointing your eyes (Rev. 3:18), and then revealing Christ to your astonished spiritual vision. -- John 16:14.
2. That conversion was the beginning of this work, which awaits a more glorious consummation when the Sanctifier comes to purify you and to abide in you, giving you a spiritual apprehension of Christ and the Father. -- Acts 15:9.
3. That Christianity in respect to the extent of its spiritual privileges has not tapered off, but, since the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Omnipotent Father, through the ever living Savior (John 14:16), yesterday, today, and forever the same" (Heb. 13:8), there must be the same wealth of blessing attainable now as in the upper chamber eighteen hundred years ago; and that if there is any change in Christian privilege, it must increase and not decrease, in accordance with the law of progress which runs through all the dispensations.
4. That simple, all-surrendering, persistent faith in the promises of Christ is the only condition; a faith that works by love, and a love that shines out through obedience.
5. Reliance on the testimony of those who witness to the coming and abiding of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, bringing them into a delightful union with Christ, though not laid down in the Scriptures as an indispensable condition of this great grace, is, nevertheless, very important, inasmuch as its absence

indicates "hardness of heart and unbelief" as the condition of your soul. "And he upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen." -- Mark 16:14. The fact that the lives of some who profess to be living on the high tableland of a full trust in Jesus Christ do not comport with their lips should no more stumble you, than the admitted fact that there are both deceivers and deceived who receive the name of Christ in baptism should cause you to doubt the divinity of the gospel of Christ. There are not a few unimpeachable witnesses to a full trust in the blood of Christ, to an incoming fullness of love and to the highest serenity of soul, to a deliverance from the power of inward evil impulse, to a cleansing from inbred sin, and to the fullness of God, the crowning blessing, for which St. Paul prayed in Eph. 3:19. Do not cherish unchristian prejudice against these brethren and sisters in the Lord's witness box. Seek their fellowship, heed their counsel, enlist their prayers; for you will find that many of them, in the language of Father Taylor, "are on speaking terms with God." Their names are known in the heavenly courts. Even if your close scrutiny should so sift them that they should be reduced from fifty, peradventure to forty-five, and then to forty, to thirty, and peradventure to ten, you will find that Christ has not left himself without witness in our age, that "he is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him." This credence given to the testimony of believers filled with the Spirit is the starting point in almost every case of successful seeking. This is the divinely appointed way of communicating a knowledge of this blissful Christ-life hidden within the soul. This accounts for the persistence in testimony which is thoughtlessly called hobbyism, and is ascribed to mental narrowness and shallowness, instead of a quenchless fire shut up in the bones. Hear them sing --

"I love thee so' I know not how

My transports to control;

Thy love is like a burning fire

Within my burning soul."

Do not be deterred from this fullness of spiritual life by the fact that the world has long since pronounced every one of its possessors a madman. The world has some good ground for its verdict. A madman is one who sees, or thinks he sees, what others see not; and seeing such things walks accordingly. Under the intense illumination of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit abiding with the believer (John 14:16-23) he sees what the blind world sees not, and shapes his conduct in accordance with the heavenly light. Hence, those who see not what he sees must think him beside himself, and express their pity that reason has been dethroned. If you are unwilling to be an unintelligible and sadly misunderstood person in the eye of the world, an enigma to your best friends who know not the experience of the indwelling Spirit, we advise you to wait till you have conquered the world in so far as to live without its good opinion. By the grace of God the thing can be done. "Be of good cheer," says our great representative and exemplar, "I have overcome the world." -- John 16:33.

An objection still arises in your mind, my semi-spiritual friend, which puzzles and disturbs you. How can a person be partly spiritual without being wholly spiritual? Say you, "I have been born of the Spirit, does not that classify me with the spiritual?" Just as Jesus was begotten by the Holy Ghost, and yet had the Spirit given him without measure at a later stage of spiritual development, after which his life, already of the Holy Ghost, took another form in the manifestation of that same Spirit, so is the divine life in your soul to be deepened and intensified beyond all your conception, if you will trust the promises of Jesus.

The fact that you are by nature depraved, and that the taint of original sin inheres even after justification, makes the need of a second work still more imperative. If the Christians in Corinth were in one breath styled "babes in Christ" and "carnal" (I Cor. 3:1), which is far worse than semi-spiritual, may you not be in that mixed state of Christian experience in which many Christians groan for deliverance?

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