

Living in the Spirit

by A.B. Simpson

To live in the Spirit means to be born of the Spirit, have received a new spiritual life from above, and to be baptized of the Holy Ghost, experiencing the in-dwelling presence and purity of God Himself.

Scripture: Isaiah 40:31, Ezekiel 36:26-27, John 3:6, John 7:38-39, John 14:17, Romans 8:2, Romans 8:11, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 5:25, 1 John 3:1

Topics: "Empowerment by the Holy Spirit", "Living in the Spirit"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the profound significance of living in the Spirit, which begins with being born of the Spirit and receiving a new spiritual life. He explains that true Christianity transcends intellectual and moral achievements, as it introduces believers into the family of God through a divine nature. Simpson further elaborates on the necessity of being baptized in the Holy Spirit, which empowers believers to live a life of holiness and strength, free from the power of sin. He illustrates that living in the Spirit involves a continuous relationship with the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies and quickens both the mind and body. Ultimately, he calls believers to embrace this divine life, recognizing the Holy Spirit as the source of their strength and vitality.

Transcript

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."-Gal. v: 25.

What is it to Live in the Spirit?

It is to be born of the Spirit. It is to have received a new spiritual life from above. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." We may have the brightest intellectual life, the most unblemished moral character, and the most amiable qualities of disposition, and yet without the new life of the Holy Spirit in our heart, we can no more enter Heaven than the lovely canary that sings in our window can become a member of our family, or the gentle lamb that our children play with can sit down at our table, and share our domestic fellowship and enjoyment. It belongs to a different world, and nothing but a new nature and human heart could bring it into fellowship with our human life. The most exalted intellect, and the most attractive, natural disposition, reach no higher than the earthly. The Kingdom of Heaven consists of the family of God, those who have risen to an entirely different sphere, and received a nature as much above the intellectual and the moral as God is above an angel.

A modern writer has finely wrought out this wonderful thought of the difference between the various orders of life, even in the natural world. The little tuft of moss that grows upon the granite rock can look down from immeasurable heights upon the mass of stone on which it rests and say, "I am transcendently above you, for I have life, vegetable life, and you are an inorganic mass!" And yet, as we ascend one step, the smallest insect that crawls upon the majestic palm tree can look down upon the most beautiful production of the vegetable world and say, "I am transcendently above you, for I have animal life, and you have not even the consciousness of your own loveliness, or of the little creature that feeds upon your blossom!" Still higher we ascend, until we reach the world of mind; and the youngest child of the most illiterate peasant can say to the mightiest creations of the animal world, to the majestic lion, king of the forest; the soaring eagle of the skies; the many-tinted bird of Paradise, or the noble steed that bears his master, like the whirlwind, over the desert, "I am your lord, for I possess intellectual life, and you have neither soul nor reason, and must perish with your expiring breath, and become like the clods beneath your feet, but I shall live forever. But there is still another step beyond all this. There is a spiritual world which is as much higher than the intellectual as that is above the physical; and the humblest and most uncultured Christian, who has just learned to pray, and say, "Our Father, who art in Heaven" from the depths of a regenerate heart, is as much above the loftiest genius of the world of mind as he is above the material creation at his feet.

This is the meaning of Christianity; it is the breath of a new nature; it is the translation of the soul into a higher universe and a loftier scale of being, even introducing it into the family of God Himself and making it a part of the Divine nature. This is indeed a stupendous mystery, and a bestowment whose glory may well fill our hearts with everlasting wonder, as we cry with the adoring apostle, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!"

Not by adoption merely are we thus admitted to the Father's house, but by actual birth; from the very bosom of the Holy Ghost, as from a heavenly mother, has our new spirit been born; just as literally as Jesus Christ Himself was born of the eternal Spirit in the bosom of Mary. So it might be said of every new-born soul: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Beloved, do we thus live in the Spirit? This is everlasting life.

2. To live in the Spirit is also to be baptized of the Holy Ghost, and have the Spirit as a Divine person living in us. There is something higher than the new birth, namely, the entering in of the Comforter, in His personal fullness and glory, to dwell in the consecrated heart and abide there for ever. Jesus was born of the Spirit in Bethlehem, but He was baptized of the Spirit thirty years later on the banks of the Jordan; and this made all the difference which we trace between His quiet years at Nazareth and His public ministry in Galilee and Judea. From that time there were two persons united in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. The Holy Ghost, as a Divine person, was united with the person of Jesus Christ, and was the source of His power and the inspiration of His teaching; and He constantly represented Himself as speaking the words and doing the works which the Spirit in Him prompted.

And so there is in the believer's life a similar experience, when the soul truly converted to God yields itself wholly to His control and becomes the living temple of the Almighty Spirit, who henceforth dwells in us, and walks in us, giving us not only a new nature, which we receive in regeneration, but a Divine Guest, a Presence to dwell in that new nature as its controlling guide and Almighty strength.

Then is fulfilled the double promise of Ezekiel: "A new heart will I give unto you and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will put my Spirit within you and will cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep

my judgments and do them." Henceforth, we live in the Spirit in a higher sense than even before our conversion. Our life is not only spiritual but divine. Henceforth, it is not we who live, but Christ who liveth in us, and we draw from Him, through the Holy Ghost, every moment, life, and health, and joy, and peace. It is not living through the Spirit, but living in the Spirit. He is the very element of our new existence; before us, behind us, above us, beneath us, within us, beyond us, we are buried in Him, lost in Him, encompassed by Him as by the air we breathe. This is the yet higher mystery of the new life, greater than the new birth. This is the secret which Paul declares was hid for ages and generations, but now made manifest to His saints. "Christ in you the hope of glory."

It is, indeed, an epoch in the soul's existence as wonderful in its measure as when the Son of God became incarnate on earth, when the Holy One crosses the threshold of the heart, and makes the spirit his personal residence, sits down upon the throne of the human will and assumes the government and control of all our being and destiny. Henceforth, we may indeed walk with holy veneration and exalted hope, exultant in joy and triumph as wondering angels declare, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, He will dwell with them and they shall be His people; God Himself shall be with them and shall be their God."

Beloved, have you claimed this high privilege, and received this heavenly Guest into the golden casket of your regenerated souls? Have you received the invaluable jewel of the Living One Himself, as the treasure in the earthen vessel and the glory in the midst?

3. To live in the Spirit is to be sanctified by the Spirit; to receive the Spirit of holiness and thus be delivered from the power of sin. They, who thus receive the Holy Ghost can say, "The spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." This is divine holiness; it is the entrance into a sinful heart of a new life which excludes the old and takes its place. It is not the cleansing of the flesh or the improving of the life of self; but it is the imparting of us of a new life which is in itself essentially pure and cannot sin, even the holy life of God.

In our childhood many of us have roamed through the native woods and seen some old fallen forest tree rotting where it lay. Through the decaying wood the earthworms and insects burrow, and perhaps the adder has built its nest and raised its poisonous brood, so that we have feared to sit down on the old, putrefying mass, and have thought of it as a type of corruption and decay. That mass of putrefaction may well represent the ruin of our sinful nature. But have we not sometimes seen a little shoot of unsullied whiteness in the early spring growing up through the rotten wood, and rising out of the mass of corruption as undefiled as the sunny wing of a dove, or the gentle hand of a babe, beautiful and pure, and unstained even by the touch of the corrupting element around it, until it has grown into a tree and covered itself with luxurious green, and our hands have often plucked from its branches the luscious berries of the summer woods? It was life in the midst of death, purity amid corruption, having no connection whatever with the soil in which it grew and incapable of mixture with its defilement.

Precisely so is the life of holiness in the soul. Like that stainless shoot, it grew from a Divine root, and has nothing in common with our own sinful nature. It is of heavenly origin, and it grows up within us in its own Divine purity and fruitfulness, until it ripens into all the rich fruition of a consecrated and heavenly life, and yet at every stage we feel that it is in no sense our own life, but the in-dwelling presence and purity of God Himself.

Beloved, have we received this sanctifying Spirit and learned this heavenly secret of holy living? And in all the exquisite rest and conscious purity and overcoming power of His presence, have we learned to live in

the Spirit?

4. To live in the Spirit is to receive the quickening life of the Holy Ghost in our physical being, and to find in Him the source of constant stimulus and strength for all the faculties of our mind, and all the functions of our body; "For if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in us, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies by His Spirit, that dwelleth in us." The subtle principle of life itself came originally, no doubt, from His inbreathing at man's creation, and why should it be thought anything incredible that He should still breathe upon our flesh the quickening life of the ascended Son of God? Are we not members of His body, and His flesh, and His bones, and does He not speak of a distinct sense in which our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost? Indeed it was the Holy Ghost, who, during Christ's ministry, always gave efficiency to His healing word, and who, through the apostles, continued to perform the same works of supernatural power. He is still the same infinite and inexhaustible life, and the bodies of His consecrated people are the subjects of His Divine influence, and His sustaining love and care.

Have we learned, beloved, the secret of His strength, and like Samson of old, do we know what it is to be moved by the Spirit until the earthen vessel becomes mighty through God to do and endure where earthly strength must fail? They, who thus "wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength; mount up with wings as eagles; run, and not be weary, walk, and not faint."

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