

(Power From on High) 10. the Holy Spirit in the Epistle to the Romans

by A.B. Simpson

The Holy Spirit is the witness to the divinity of Jesus Christ, the source of physical, mental, and spiritual life, and the guide and director of our Christian lives.

Scripture: Romans 1:3-4, Romans 8:2, Romans 8:5-6, Romans 8:9, Romans 8:11, Romans 8:14, Romans 8:23, Romans 8:26, Romans 12:1, Romans 14:17

Topics: "The Holy Spirit", "Christian Living"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the transformative power of the Holy Spirit as presented in the Epistle to the Romans, highlighting the Spirit's role as a witness to Christ's divinity, the source of life and holiness, and the guide for Christian living. He explains how the Holy Spirit empowers believers to live above sin, intercedes in prayer, and fosters a deep sense of sonship and hope for future glory. Simpson encourages Christians to embrace the Holy Spirit's guidance and to actively participate in the mission of evangelization, reminding them that the Spirit brings joy and strength for service.

Transcript

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Rom. 8: 9.

We approach, in this great epistle, a spiritual temple, and from its illuminated windows there shine out the beams of lofty and divine truth. It is so glorious that it needs only to be stated to bring its own illumination and vindication. This, the greatest of the epistles, presents to us the doctrine of the Holy Ghost with a symmetry and fullness quite as remarkable as the unfolding of the other doctrines which it contains.

I.

First, we have the witnessing Spirit. In Romans 1: 3, 4, the Lord Jesus Christ is said to have been "of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

The Spirit of holiness has been interpreted to mean the divine nature of Jesus Christ, but it is quite proper and, indeed, a more simple interpretation to apply it directly to the Holy Ghost as a divine Person, witnessing to the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, by raising Him from the dead according to the will of the

Father.

The Holy Ghost was ever the witness to Christ's divinity, and the Spirit Who had so distinct a part in the offering up of His sacrifice (for it was "by the eternal Spirit that He offered Himself to God without spot") had surely as important a part in His resurrection. This is the first view we love to take of the Holy Spirit, as the Witness of Jesus, and especially of the risen Jesus, the living Christ, and the divine Lord.

II.

We next see the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of life and holiness. In Romans 8: 2, we read, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

This is the first work of the Holy Ghost in sanctifying the soul. Let us carefully notice the place where this comes in. It is subsequent to our justification by faith and our surrender to Christ in death and resurrection. Then the Holy Spirit comes and takes possession of us and breathes into us the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. This becomes a new law of life and power in our spiritual being, and this new law lifts us above and sets us free from the old law of sin and death.

Just as the law of life lifts us above the law of gravitation, and the power of my will can raise my hand in spite of that physical law which makes dead matter fall to the ground, so the Holy Ghost, bringing Christ as a living presence into my heart and life, establishes a new law of feeling, thinking, choosing, and acting, and this new law lifts me above the power of sin and makes it natural for me to be holy, obedient, and Christ-like.

III.

We see the Holy Spirit operating in the mind as well as in the spirit, and we read in the next paragraph, verses 5 and 6, "The minding of the flesh is death, but the minding of the Spirit is life and peace." The Holy Spirit enters the mind and disposes it to the will of God, so that we choose the things that He chooses, and think God's thoughts after Him.

We mind the Monitor Who dwells within us; we listen to the voice that speaks to us; we follow His directions, and "we walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

IV.

The Holy Spirit is next revealed as the Spirit of quickening and healing in our mortal flesh. In verse 11, "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal body by His Spirit that dwelleth in you."

The Holy Ghost is the source of physical as well as mental and spiritual life. The human body consists of more than the outward frame. There is the inner mechanism of nerves, and, inside of that, the vital fluids and currents which quicken, energize, and impel the whole material organism.

Inside of all this is the principle of life, and inside of this is the Holy Ghost in the consecrated believer. He is most distinctly represented to us here as a vital force in our material being, a source of life, quickening, exhilaration and physical energy for those that know Him and obey Him. He is the Spirit that raised up Christ from the dead, and He dwells in our mortal bodies as a quickening life. This is not the immortal body of the resurrection, but the mortal frame of the present life which feeds upon the divine life. And this is the

secret of living on the life of God.

It is thus that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and our frames are the members of Christ, and partake of the life of our living Head.

V.

The Holy Spirit, as the guide and director of our Christian life, is very clearly presented to us in the next few verses. "Therefore," adds the apostle, "we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

We are to "live after the Spirit"; we are to obey our divine Guide; we are to follow our heavenly Leader; we are to yield ourselves to the Mother and the Monitor who comes to direct our pathway.

Christian life is not a mere moment of blessed transformation, but it is a life of continual abiding and obedience. Step by step, we must walk with God and maintain the attitude and habit of dependence and holy obedience. The Holy Spirit never wearies of the care of our life, and we should never weary of His loving jealousy for us. This is the secret of peace and gladness constant obedience and a hearkening spirit that waits to catch the whisper of His will and obey His every word.

VI.

In this passage we have another most important truth; namely, that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of crucifixion. He is the One that mortifies our evil nature and holds us in the place of death and resurrection life. The attitude of the Christian life is that of reckoning ourselves dead, indeed, unto sin.

This attitude must be maintained as a habit, and there are constant occasions when the old life will seek to reassert itself and must be held steadily in the place of death. This is what is meant by "mortifying our members," and this can only be done by the Holy Ghost. If we attempt it ourselves we shall be everlastingly in the attitude of attempted suicide, and we shall never reach the place of peaceful death. The reason so many ghosts are walking around is because so many people have tried to die in their own strength, and have got up in the same strength, and walk about as the apparitions and shadows of the old carnal life.

The Church of God is full of these uncanny spirits, these live corpses, these resurrected ones; and they are very sad looking objects to themselves and to everybody else. The true secret is to be so full of the Holy Ghost that, like the autumn leaves which drop off by the coming of the spring, our old life shall be kept in the place of death by the expulsive power of divine love and Christ's indwelling life.

VII.

The Spirit of sonship is also clearly unfolded in this beautiful paragraph: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." The Holy Ghost brings us into the same relation with the Father as Jesus Christ, the divine Son. We are made partakers of His Sonship through His indwelling life, and the prayer of the Master becomes fulfilled in us and through us, "that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me, may be in them and I in them." It is because He is in us that the Father loves us with the same love that He loves the Son, and we dwell in the blessed consciousness and confidence of this place of child liberty and love.

We are called the first born ones. We are all first born ones, even as He is the First Born One and the Only Begotten. We partake of His very Sonship; and as the bride shares the bridegroom's family and home, so we enter into all privileges, immunities, glories, and prospects of Christ's own glorious life. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us," and the Spirit hath brought to us, "that we should be called the sons of God."

Beloved, have we received power thus to become the sons of God, and does the Spirit, not of adoption, but of Sonship, cry out instinctively from our inmost being, "Papa, Father," our own dear Father, His Father and our Father, His God and our God?

VIII.

The Spirit of hope and anticipation of the coming glory is next seen. And so we read in verse 23, "And not only they, but ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption; to wit, the redemption of our body."

That is, the Holy Spirit awakens the consciousness and brings the earnest of the coming glory, and calls forth our eager longing and outreaching for it. Just as the embryo birdling in its shell, when the time for its birth draws near it, presses through the restraints that confine until at last it bursts the fragile shell and leaps forth into liberty and life to breathe the air of the great world, and soon to leave the firmament on eagle's wings, so the Spirit-filled heart has in it the bud and the embryo of a transcendent future, and it stretches out even now its nascent wings, and groans within itself for the coming glory.

Who is there of all the disciples of Christ who has not some time felt the birth-pangs of a grander life and the prophecy of a future transcending all we know of power and blessing?

We have not only the conception and anticipation of this glorious future, but the apostle says we have "the first fruits" even now. The Spirit of God in our hearts is the prophecy and promise of the coming age of more glorious spiritual life when we shall be like Him, and clothed with His perfections and something of His wisdom and power, we shall share His throne forever.

The touches of divine healing that have thrilled our mortal frame are but the foretaste of the resurrection hour, when we shall sweep up into the fullness of our eternal manhood, and these mortal frames shall be as beautiful, as glorious, as pure, and as strong as His glorified body on the throne.

What we have seen of answered prayer, of power over nature, of victory over circumstances, of divine life even in this limited sphere, these are but anticipations and earnest-payments of the time when we shall inherit the kingdom which Adam lost, and share man's destined dominion over the whole creation.

And so the Holy Spirit in us is teaching us the millennial song, is waking up in us the pulses of the resurrection, is illuminating before us the vision of the coming glory, and is calling us out to prove even here our celestial wings.

And as the parent eagle teaches her little ones to fly, moment by moment and effort by effort, luring them from their soft nest, bearing them on her mighty wings, so the Mother Dove is teaching us to spread our wings upon the higher air and press forward into a little of our future inheritance.

Oh, let us not be disobedient to these heavenly visions! Let us not repress these outreachings. Let us not quench these immortal fires. And let us not cramp and stunt, and crush out the heavenly inspirations and

aspirations which carry with them not only the prophecy, but the vital power of an endless and boundless life.

IX.

In the twenty-sixth verse we have the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of prayer. "Likewise also the Spirit helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what to pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

This is the deep mystery of prayer. This is the delicate divine mechanism which words cannot interpret, and which theology cannot explain, but which the humblest believer knows even when he does not understand.

Oh, the burdens that we love to bear and cannot understand! Oh, the inarticulate outreachings of our hearts for things we cannot comprehend! And yet we know they are an echo from the throne and a whisper from the heart of God. It is often a groan rather than a song, a burden rather than a buoyant wing. But it is a blessed burden, and it is a groan whose undertone is praise and unutterable joy. It is "a groaning which cannot be uttered." We could not ourselves express it always, and sometimes we do not understand any more than that God is praying in us, for something that needs His touch and that He understands.

And so we can just pour out the fullness of our heart, the burden of our spirit, the sorrow that crushes us, and know that He hears, He loves, He understands, He receives; and He separates from our prayer all that is imperfect, ignorant and wrong, and presents the rest, with the incense of the great High Priest, before the throne on high; and our prayer is heard, accepted and answered in His name.

X.

The Spirit of service is His attribute. The Holy Ghost is next represented as the Spirit of power for consecrated service. In the twelfth chapter of Romans and the first verse, there is a singular and beautiful force in the use of the Greek word "paraclete."

The expression, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren by the mercies of God " literally means, "I paraclete you by the mercies of God"; that is, not I, but the Holy Ghost beseeches you, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. This is the Holy Spirit's message to the saved and sanctified children of God, and this is the true power for consecration and service.

We may so identify ourselves with the blessed Paraclete, that our appeals and messages to men shall not be ours but His, and we can say, "I Paraclete you"; in the name of the Holy Ghost, beseech you. Thus our words and works will come to men with the authority and the power of the Holy Ghost.

XI.

The Spirit of gladness is revealed in Romans 14: 17. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Romans 15: 13. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

The Holy Spirit is always the Spirit of gladness, and the Spirit of gladness and hope is essential to power for service and effective testimony for Christ.

XII.

The Spirit of missions is His Spirit. The crowning revelation of the Holy Ghost in this sublime epistle is the Spirit of evangelization for the whole world. It is very beautiful that in this, the most doctrinal of all the epistles, the most profound theological treatise on justification, sanctification and the purposes of God ever written by inspired hands, should be these closing words respecting the ministry of the Holy Ghost for the evangelization of the whole world. But how could it be otherwise from such a soul and such a hand as Paul's?

Listen to these inspiring words: "I have written more boldly unto you, as putting you again in remembrance, because of the grace that was given me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ unto the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. I have therefore my glorifying in Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of anything save those which Christ wrought for me, for the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ; yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation; but as it is written, To whom He was not spoken of, they shall see; and they who have not heard shall understand." Rom. 15: 15-21.

To the glowing heart of Paul the work of missions was just the offering up of the Gentile world as a great living sacrifice to God, sanctified by the Holy Ghost. To present this offering to God was the glorious and all absorbing service of his life, and in this he had claimed and received the mighty power of the Holy Spirit; so that his soul could truly say, "through mighty signs and wonders from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." He could not rest in the beaten tracks of old and occupied fields, but pressed forward to the regions beyond to tell the story of divine love and grace, where Christ had not been named.

In an age when all our methods of international communication were unknown, when there were no railroads, steamboats, telegraphs, nor missionary societies, this lone man preached the Gospel, from land to land, until he could say of this vast region of the known world that circled round Jerusalem, he had so fully preached the gospel of Christ that no place was left in those parts, and that he was now at length at leisure to visit his friends in Rome and do some home mission work.

Wherever the Holy Ghost has possession of our hearts and lives, this will be the impulse that will possess us, and it will be the practical outcome of our consecration, until we shall have given the gospel as a witness to every tribe and tongue, and the purpose of the Christian Dispensation to gather out of the Gentiles a people for His name shall be accomplished, and the Lord Himself shall come.

Oh, may the Holy Spirit help each of us, from the study of this wonderful epistle, to understand His meaning for us and for our times, and to rise from the grandest truths of the gospel to the grandest work of the ages!

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