

# The Spirit of Life

by A.B. Simpson

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*A.B. Simpson explores the vital role of the Holy Spirit in imparting life, empowering believers, and connecting physical existence to divine purpose.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 104:29-30, Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 12:28, John 14:6, Acts 1:8, Romans 8:11, Romans 8:23, 1 Corinthians 6:19, 2 Corinthians 4:11, Philippians 4:13

**Topics:** "Life in Christ", "The Holy Spirit"

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## Description

A.B. Simpson explores the profound question of life through Romans 8, emphasizing that true life is found in God, who is the source of all vitality. He explains how the Holy Spirit imparts life to believers, quickening their mortal bodies and enabling them to experience divine strength and healing. Simpson illustrates this through biblical examples, such as the creation, the life of Samson, and the ministry of Christ, asserting that the Holy Spirit's work is essential for both spiritual and physical vitality. He encourages believers to recognize the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence and to rely on Him for strength and healing in their lives. Ultimately, Simpson assures that the same Spirit that raised Christ will also quicken our bodies, offering a foretaste of the future resurrection.

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## Transcript

Rom. viii.

What is life? The unsolved question of science and philosophy. What is it that makes the difference between that soaring bird with buoyant wing and burnished breast, as it mounts the air, and that little limp, broken thing that the hunter gathers up in his hand a moment later, as it has fallen before the cruel fire? What is the cause of this strange, terrible change? The galvanic battery can mimic some of the movements of life in muscle and limb, but when the current ceases the movement stops, and in a few hours the flesh has yielded to the power of corruption, and is dissolving into earth again.

What life does, we know, but what it is, science marks with a note of interrogation.

One of the most remarkable popular books of science, from a Christian standpoint, is Professor Drummond's "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," but perhaps the only thoroughly weak and unsatisfactory chapter in it is that in which he tries to define life and death.

Science is approaching slowly the true centre which the Bible gave us so long ago. It is steadily reducing all vital force to one essential principle, perhaps electricity. The Bible has settled the question long ago in regard to Him who is the source of life: "This is the true God and eternal life." God is the fount of life, and Christ is the life of God for men, and His life is the true source of life for the souls and bodies of His children. This life He imparts to us through the Holy Spirit, who becomes to the soul that is united to Him, the medium and the channel of vital union and communion with Christ, our Living Head. It is thus that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, because He imparts to us the life of Jesus. It is especially of His part, in connection with our physical life, that we are to speak at this time.

That He should be able to quicken our mortal bodies should not seem strange even upon the most general view of the subject. As we have already intimated, even physical science has been learning, in some measure, to recognize life, not so much as a matter of external organism and coarse material elements, as of vital force.

Half a century has changed radically the methods of treatment known to medical science, and led physicians to rely much more upon natural forces and resources, and more subtle and vital elements, to counteract the power of disease than formerly.

The influence of air and occupation, of surrounding circumstances and mental conditions, all these have far greater weight today than formerly, because health is recognized as the result of inward forces more than of outward agencies. These are distinct approximations toward the higher truth, that the source of our strength must be looked for in the direct power and contact of that spiritual personality in whom "we live, and move, and have our being."

This is the plain teaching of the Holy Scriptures from beginning to end, and we shall probably be surprised to find how much is taught in these sacred pages respecting the relation of the Holy Spirit to our physical life.

I.

The Part of the Holy Spirit in Creation.

We know that the Divine Spirit is recognized in the Scriptures as the direct agent in the original creation, and the Spirit of life and order in the whole domain in nature and providence.

How strikingly all this is described in the majestic Psalm of nature, the one hundred and fourth: "Thou hidest Thy face, they are troubled; Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created; and Thou renewest the face of the earth."

This is, however, the power that formed the heavens with their orbs of light, that covers the woods and fields with their robes of many-tinted glory, that animates the teeming world of insect and animal life, that breathed into man the breath of life at the beginning, and still sustains his physical existence, and that has created all his mortal powers and endowments. Why should it be thought strange that He who made us should sustain us, restore us, and "quicken our mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in us?"

II.

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Body

in the Old Testament.

We have a very remarkable pattern of physical life in one of the Old Testament biographies. It is the story of Samson, and it was directly intended as a lesson of the true nature and source of physical strength.

Samson's stupendous power was not due to physical organization at all, but only and directly to the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, for in the very beginning of his strength it is repeatedly added, that "the Spirit of the Lord began to move him, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him," etc. Jud. xii: 25; xiv: 6; xiv: 19; and xvi: 28.

When he was deserted by the Holy Spirit he was helpless in the hands of his enemies, but when he was filled with the superhuman power of God's Spirit he could carry away the gates of the city, or hurl the walls of Dagon's temple upon the assembled thousands of his enemies.

The lesson of his life is unmistakably fore-shadowed in the great New Testament truth that our bodily life as well as our spiritual has its root and nourishment in God, and that, as we walk in separation from evil, and fellowship with Him, "He that raised up Jesus from the dead will also quicken our mortal bodies by the Spirit that dwelleth in us."

III.

The Part of the Holy Spirit in the Personal

Ministry of Christ.

It was He that wrought the supernatural works of the Lord Jesus on earth. Not one miracle did he perform until He received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Then he said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to set at liberty them that are bruised;" and when his enemies attributed his miracles to the power of Satan, He distinctly declared that they were performed by the power of the Holy Ghost, and added, "If I by the Holy Ghost cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God has come unto you." And then he proceeded to charge them with the fatal sin against the Holy Ghost in thus attributing His works to Satan. See Matt. xii: 28.

If then, Christ cast out demons and wrought miracles by the power of the Holy Ghost, and it is the same Spirit who still abides in the church, and dwells in the hearts and bodies of believers, why should it be thought strange that the Almighty Spirit, who thus wrought in the Son of God, should work in our bodies the same works, and thus quicken them, as our text declares?

IV.

The Part of the Holy Ghost in the Apostolic Ministry, and in the Permanent

Enduement of the Church.

It was not until the Holy Spirit descended that the apostles were permitted to exercise their ministry in power, and all the mighty works that followed are distinctly attributed by Peter and the other apostles to His personal working. He quotes from the prophet Joel the distinct promise, "I will pour out in those days of my Spirit," and it is followed by the announcement that shall ensue, "And I will show wonders in the heavens above, and miracles in the earth beneath."

It was after the Holy Ghost descended again, a little later, until the place was shaken, that we read, "By the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people." And it was to be through His continuance and supernatural presence that the divine gifts were to be manifested in the church to the end of the dispensation. 1 Cor. xii: 4. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. To one there is given the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles by the same Spirit, but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to everyone severally as he will."

Thus we see that all the supernatural effects of Christianity are accomplished through the Holy Spirit. It is His very province to perpetuate in the Church the very works that Christ performed through Him on earth, the Church being simply the body of the ascended Saviour, and the channel through which He is to work in the same divine manner; even as the Master said when promising His coming: "The works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these he shall do, because I go to my Father."

Why then, should it seem strange that this blessed Spirit should do the very work He came to do, and still quicken our mortal bodies as He dwells within us?

V.

The Special Ministry of the Holy Ghost for

our Bodies.

In the sixth chapter of 1 Corinthians, the dignity and sacredness of the human body are very clearly presented as an argument against impurity in our social relations. "Know ye not," He asks, "that your bodies are the members of Christ?" verse 15; and then, verse 19, "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" Previously, in this epistle, He had spoken of the Spirit's ministry within us in a more spiritual sense--chapter iii: 16, VT-but here He refers explicitly to His union with our physical life, and with the body of Jesus Christ as God's substitute for unholy physical connection. The body is for the Lord and the Lord for the body; and it is the ministry of the Holy Ghost thus to unite our body to our Lord's, and to inhabit it and hold it in sacredness and purity for Him.

Let us distinctly understand that it is of our physical life that these Scriptures speak, not our spiritual. That is also united to Christ. But surely with so much teaching regarding that portion of our being, we can afford to claim these specific references for that which was intended by them--our consecrated physical life.

The only way in which the simple and conclusive effect of our text can be turned aside is by attempting to apply it to the future resurrection, as sometimes has been done. It is therefore well that we should carefully look at its connection, and establish its true application on sound exegetical grounds.

1. The general connection of the whole chapter makes this very plain. No less an authority than John Calvin has proved that this passage cannot refer to the future resurrection, because the apostle is speaking, in this place, of the present work of the Holy Ghost in the believer, and it is not until much later that he advances to the future hopes that await us at the Lord's coming, which he does enlarge upon after the eighteenth verse. The subject of the chapter is the blessed indwelling of the Holy Spirit in those who have yielded themselves wholly to Christ.

The first effect of His indwelling is given in the second verse; it is deliverance from indwelling sin through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

The second is the new habit of obedience to the Spirit, expressed so beautifully in the eighth chapter of Romans, fifth and sixth verses, by the expression, "The minding of the Spirit is life and peace." "They that after the Spirit do mind the things of the Spirit."

The third effect of the Spirit's indwelling is His quickening life for our bodies, and this is here described in the text.

In the previous verse the body is recognized as well as the soul, as yielded up to death, and so reckoned as good as dead, that we do not henceforth depend upon its natural strength as sufficient; but in contrast with this the Holy Spirit becomes its new life and quickens our mortal body by the same power which raised Christ from the dead.

This follows later in the chapter, verses 14, 15.

The blessed leading of the Holy Ghost through the experience of Christian life, culminating at last in the realization of our future hope when we shall enter into the full redemption of the body at Christ's second coming, verse 23; but even of this full redemption of the body, we are told in the same verse, that we have even now the first fruits of the Spirit. That is, of course, the quickening influence which the Spirit exercises, even in the present life, in our mortal bodies, and which is the foretaste of the full resurrection.

Thus, the very order of the chapter prepares us to apply the text to a present experience. John Calvin, as we have already stated, does so, but instead of recognizing that present Spirit as divine healing, of which probably the good reformer never thought, He regards it as the consecrating of our bodies to the service and glory of God, a sense, of course, which the word quicken does not bear.

2. This leads us to inquire into the meaning of the word "quicken."

It would require a very strong inversion, and, we almost think, perversion of the word, to apply this term to the consecration of the body, for it literally means the reviving, stimulating, animating, invigorating of its strength.

The nearest parallel passage where it is employed is in this same epistle, a few chapters previously, where it is applied, chapter iv: 17, to the act which God performed in quickening the body of Abraham when he was past age, and also the vital organs of Sarah, his wife, so that Isaac was born contrary to nature.

In this case, neither Abraham nor Sarah were dead, but their vital system was exhausted, and it was simply quickened, revived and renewed.

Thus the word would not suggest the literal resurrection of the dead, but rather the reviving and restoring of strength when it is exhausted; precisely what is done when our failing health is renewed, and our infirmities are healed by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit through the name of Jesus.

3. It will make this conclusion still more obvious if we remember that it is our mortal bodies that are here described, not our souls at all, but our physical organization.

This, therefore, is a direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon our vital functions, organs and health, and any other application is contrary to the simple and natural meaning of the passage.

4. That this is not the resurrection body is certain from the fact that it is called the mortal body. Now the mortal body means a dying body, and certainly that is not a dead body, and still more certainly, it is not a resurrected body, for the bodies of the saints, when raised from the dead at Christ's coming, shall not be mortal bodies, but immortal, nor "can they die any more," our Lord Himself has said.

5. The whole induction of proof is crowned by the clause "that dwelleth in us."

Now that must mean the present dwelling of the Holy Spirit in our present mortal bodies. It cannot mean our buried dust, for then the Spirit will not be dwelling in us. It is a process which is now going on through the present indwelling and inworking of the Holy Ghost.

We might add to these thoughts the impressive one suggested by the terms, "the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead." This is the Spirit of a physical resurrection. The resurrection of Christ from the dead was a spiritual resurrection. His soul was not dead, it was His body that was raised from the tomb, and if it be the pattern of the Spirit's working in us in this connection, it must have reference to our body too.

We have not sufficiently realized the physical meaning of Christ's resurrection, or given due weight to the stupendous fact that He who came forth from that grave has become the physical head of our life, and that "we are members of His body, His flesh, and of His bones," and have a right to draw from His glorious frame the fullness of His life and strength, so far as these vessels of clay can hold it and use it for His service and glory.

Thus we see that the Holy Spirit has a direct ministry for our bodies, even as Christ's body has a direct relation to our physical being. Have we thus received Him? Do we thus know Him? And, ceasing to depend upon our natural strength, have we learned the blessed secret, "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." "They that wait upon the Lord shall change their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

VI.

The Relation of the Holy Spirit to the

Future Resurrection.

This is the climax of the simple argument respecting the blessed working of the Holy Spirit in our bodies.

While he quickens our mortal bodies now, there is awaiting us a glorious and immortal tabernacle which shall be fashioned like unto the body of His glory.

Speaking of it, the apostle says, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven; if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." And then he adds,

"Now He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God," that is for the physical resurrection. And then follows this most important sentence which should be perfectly weighed, "who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit."

Anyone who knows the meaning of the word "earnest" need not have it demonstrated that it implies the first sample in actual kind of the flower and fruit which is afterwards to follow.

An earnest of the harvest is the first sheaf, the very same in kind as that which is to come. An earnest of the field produced, is a handful of the very soil which we have bought. And so, an earnest of the resurrection is a part of that resurrection life experienced now in our physical frame.

To say that the Holy Spirit in our hearts is the earnest, would be to contradict the very meaning of the terms, to make a thing of a different class, an earnest of something utterly diverse. The Spirit in our hearts now is an earnest of our spiritual exaltation yonder, the Spirit in our mortal bodies now is an earnest of the resurrection of the body then in physical immortality.

This is exactly what the apostle said in parallel passage, Rom. viii: 23, "We ourselves, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

We have the firstfruits of the resurrection, and we are waiting for the full harvest, and the firstfruits are, 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 bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

We have all we can hold in the vessel of clay now; we shall then have all we can contain in the larger vessel of glory, when, thrilled with the rapturous touch of His life, we shall soar away from the fetters of the tomb and the restraints of our present frailties and limitations, into all the might and majesty of His own glorious life and power. Then, like Him, our flesh shall be "like fine brass, as if it burned in a furnace, our eyes like flames of fire," our bodies able to penetrate through material barriers, to rise beyond the clouds, to spurn the restraining forces of matter and nature, to possess immeasurable space, and share his own divine and mighty works; for we shall be like Him when we see Him as He is.

But this we may have even now in foretaste, as the Spirit quickens our mortal bodies, until we take hold of the glory of the resurrection.

In Conclusion.

How shall we walk in this Spirit of life?

1. We must have Him as the occupant of our heart; we must know Him by a deep and real spiritual experience. Everything in its own order; and the new order is, first, the spiritual and then the material.

Like Him who came from the innermost shrine of the tabernacle, moving outward to meet His people, so the Holy Ghost still comes from the holy place to the heart until He fills all the extremities of our physical being, so that divine healing has been called the overflow of the Holy Ghost from a heart that can hold no more, and pours its redundant fullness into every open channel of our physical life.

2. We must distinctly recognize the promise of His residence in our bodies, and claim Him in this specific way. Every new experience must first be apprehended and then appropriated; and so we must see them

to be a redemption right, and then put forth our hand and take of the Tree of Life and eat and live forever.

3. We must receive the Holy Ghost as an abiding guest into our flesh as well as our heart.

The word dwell, translated, in this verse, is a very strong one. It is the Greek word oikeo, and in the last clause the still stronger expression, enoikeo. It means to dwell habitually; to dwell as we dwell at home, to be the welcome, constant guest, and find His residence not only with us, but, as the last term expresses, in the innermost depths of our being.

4. We must abide in Him by hearkening to His voice, obeying His will, using our strength for His service and glory, and constantly recognizing Him, and not mere natural strength, as the source of our life.

This habit can be cultivated; God may have to train us in it by cutting off the outward supplies and sources of physical power; He may let the natural life wither until it seems we must sink and die, and, as stated in the previous verse, if Christ be in us the body is dead because of sin, but then we must remember that the Spirit is life because of righteousness. And though, like Paul in 2 Cor. iv: 11, we seem to be almost delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, yet we must receive the life of Christ in our mortal flesh, and we shall find that it is still as true as it was in Paran's desert and Judali's wilderness, that "man must not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

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