

The Newness of the Spirit

by Andrew Murray

The sermon emphasizes the importance of relying on the Spirit's power and not our own self-effort in serving God, and highlights the contrast between serving in the oldness of the letter and serving in the newness of the Spirit.

Scripture: Ezekiel 36:26, Matthew 26:41, Romans 6:14, Romans 7:4, Romans 7:6, Romans 8:2, 1 Corinthians 2:12, 2 Corinthians 3:17, Galatians 5:18, Philippians 4:13

Topics: "Newness of Life", "The Work of the Holy Spirit"

Description

Andrew Murray emphasizes the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life, contrasting the old life under the law with the new life in the Spirit. He explains that the Spirit's work is to enlighten, sanctify, and strengthen believers, enabling them to serve God not through the oldness of the letter but in the newness of the Spirit. Murray highlights that true freedom from sin and the law comes through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which empowers believers to live righteously. He encourages believers to fully embrace this newness of life, recognizing their dependence on the Spirit for strength and guidance. Ultimately, Murray calls for a deeper understanding and experience of the Spirit's work in their lives.

Transcript

But now we have been discharged from the law, having died, to that wherein we were holden; so that we serve in newness of the Spirit, and not in oldness of the letter.'-Rom. 7:6.

If ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.'-Gal. 5:18

THE work of the indwelling Spirit is to glorify Christ and reveal Him within us. Corresponding to Christ's threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King, we find that the work of the Indwelling Spirit in the believer is set before us in three aspects, as Enlightening, Sanctifying, and Strengthening. 'Of the Enlightening it is that Christ specially speaks in His farewell discourse, when He promises Him as the Spirit of Truth, who will bear witness of Him, will guide into all Truth, will take of Christ's and declare it unto us. In the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians His work as Sanctifying is especially prominent: this was what was needed in Churches just brought out of the depths of heathenism. In the Epistles to the Corinthians, where wisdom was so sought and prized, the two aspects are combined; they are taught that the Spirit can only enlighten as He sanctifies (1 Cor.2 , 3:1-3, 16 ; 2 Cor. 3). In the Acts of the Apostles, as we might expect, His Strengthening for work is in the foreground; as the promised Spirit of Power He fits for a bold and blessed testimony in the midst of persecution and difficulty.

In the Epistle to the Church at Rome, the capital of the world, Paul was called of God to give a full and systematic exposition of His gospel and the scheme of redemption. In this the work of the Holy Spirit must needs have an important place. In giving his text or theme (Rom 1: 17), 'The righteous shall live by faith,' he paves the way for what he was to expound, that through Faith both Righteousness and Life would come. In the first part of his argument, to v. 11, he teaches what the Righteousness of faith is. He then proceeds (v. 12-21) to prove how this Righteousness, is rooted in our living connection with the second Adam, and in a justification of Life. In the individual (6: 1-13) this Life comes through the believing acceptance of Christ's death to sin and His life to God as ours, and the willing surrender (6: 14-23) to be servants of God and of righteousness. Proceeding to show that in Christ we are not only dead to sin, but to the law too as the strength of sin, he comes naturally to the new law which His gospel brings to take the place of the old, the law of the Spirit Of life in Christ Jesus.

We all know how an impression is heightened by the force of contrast. Just as the apostle had contrasted (6: 13-23) the service of sin and of righteousness, so he here (7: 4) contrasts, to bring out fully what the power and work of the Spirit is, the service in the oldness of the letter, in bondage to the law, with the service in newness of the Spirit, in the liberty and power which Jesus through the Spirit gives. In the following passage, Rom. vii. 14-25, and Rom. 8:1-16, we have the contrast worked out; it is in the light of that contrast alone that the two states can be rightly understood. Each state has its key-word, indicating the character of the life it describes. In Rom. 7 we have the word Law twenty times, and the word Spirit only once. In Rom. 8, on the contrary, we find in its first sixteen verses the word Spirit sixteen times. The contrast is between the Christian life in its two possible states, in the law and in the Spirit. Paul had very boldly said, not only, You are dead to sin and made free from sin that you might become servants to righteousness and to God (Rom.6), but also, 'We were made dead to the law, so that, having died to that wherein we were holden, we serve in newness of spirit, and not in, oldness of the letter.' We have here, then, a double advance, on the teaching of Rom. 6. There it was the death to sin and freedom from it, here it is death to the law and freedom from it. There it was newness of life' (Rom. 5: 4), as an objective reality secured to us in Christ; here it is ' newness of spirit' (Rom.7: 6), as a subjective experience made ours by the indwelling of the Spirit. He that would fully know and enjoy the life in the Spirit must know what life in the law is, and how complete the freedom from it with which he is made free by the Spirit.

In the description Paul gives of the life of a believer, who is still held in bondage of the law, and seeks to fulfil it, there are three expressions in which the characteristic marks of that state are summed up. The first is, the word flesh. ' I am carnal (fleshly), sold under sin. In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing' (14, 18). If we want to understand the word carnal, we must refer to Paul's exposition of it in 1 Cor. 3: 1-3. He uses it there of Christians, who, though regenerate, have not yielded themselves to the Spirit entirely, so as to become spiritual.' They have the Spirit, but allow the flesh to prevail. And so there is a difference between Christians, as they bear their name, carnal or spiritual, from the element that is strongest in them. As long as they have the Spirit, but, owing to whatever cause, do not accept fully His mighty deliverance, and so strive in their own strength, they do not and cannot become spiritual. St. Paul here describes the regenerate man, as he is in himself. He lives by the Spirit, but, according to Gal.5: 25, does not walk by the Spirit. He has the new spirit within him, according to Ezek.36:26, but he has not intelligently and practically accepted God's own Spirit to dwell and rule within that spirit, as the life of His life. He is still carnal.

The second expression we find in ver. 18 'To will is present with me, but how to do that which is good, is not.' In every possible variety of expression Paul (7: 15-2 1) attempts to make clear the painful state of

utter impotence in which the law, the effort to fulfil it, leaves a man : ' The good which I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I practise.', Willing, but not doing such is the service of God in the oldness of the letter, in the life before Pentecost (see Matt. 26: 41). The renewed spirit of the man has accepted and consented to the will of God ; but the secret of power to do, the Spirit of God, as indwelling, is not yet known. In those, on the contrary, who know what the life in the Spirit is, God works both to will and to do ; the Christian testifies, ' I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me.' But this is only possible through faith and the Holy Spirit. As long as the believer has not consciously been made free from the law with its, 'He that doeth these things shall live through them,' continual failure will attend his efforts to do the will of God. He may even delight in the law of God after the inward man, but the power is wanting.

It is only when he submits to the law of faith, 'He that liveth shall do these things,' because he knows that he has been made free from the law, that he may be joined to another, to the living Jesus, working in him through His Holy Spirit, that he will indeed bring forth fruit unto God (see Rom. 7: 4).

The third expression we must note is in verse 23 'I see a different law in my members, bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members.' This word, captivity, as that other one, sold under sin, suggests the idea of slaves sold into bondage, without the liberty, or the power to do as they will. They point back to what he had said in the commencement of the chapter, that we have been made free from the law; here is evidently one who does not yet know that liberty. And they point forward to what he is to say in chap. 8: 2: 'The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.' The freedom with which we have been made free in Christ, as offered to our faith, cannot be fully accepted or experienced as long as there is ought of a legal spirit. It is only by the Spirit of Christ within us that the full liberation is effected. As in the oldness of the letter, so in the newness of the Spirit, a twofold relation exists: the objective or external, the subjective or personal. There is the law over me, and outside of me, and there is the law of sin in my members, deriving its strength from the objective one. Just so, in being made free from the law, there is the objective liberty in Christ offered to -my faith, and there is the subjective personal possession of that liberty, in its fulness and power, to be had alone through the Spirit dwelling and ruling in my members, even as' the law of sin had done. This alone can change the plaint of the captive: 'Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from -the bondage of this death?' into the song of the ransomed: 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord,' ' The law of the Spirit made me free.'

And how now have we to regard the two states thus set before us in Rom. 7: 14-23 and via. 1-16? Are they interchangeable, or successive, or simultaneous?

Many have thought that they are a description of the varying experience of the believer's life. As often as, by the grace of God, he is able to do what is good, and to live well -pleasing to God, he experiences the grace of chap. 8, while the consciousness of sin or shortcoming plunges him again into the wretchedness of chap. 7. Though now the one and then the other experience may be more marked, each day brings the experience of both.

Others have felt that this is not the life of a believer as God would have it , and as the provision of God's grace has placed it within our reach. And as they saw that a life in the freedom with which, Christ makes free, when the Holy Spirit dwells within us, is within our reach, and as they entered on it, it was to them indeed as if now, for ever they had left the experience of Rom. vii far behind, and they cannot but look upon it as Israel's wilderness life, a life never more to be returned to. And there are many who can testify what light and blessing has come to them as they saw what the blessed transition was from the bondage of the law to the liberty of the Spirit.

And yet, however large the measure of truth in this view, it does not fully satisfy. The believer feels that there is not a day that he gets beyond the words, 'In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.' Even when kept most joyously in the will of God, and strengthened not only to will but also to do, he knows that it is not he, but the grace of God: 'in me dwelleth no good.' And so the believer comes to see that, not the two experiences, but the two states are simultaneous, and, that even when his experience is most fully that of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus making him free, he still bears about with him the body of sin and death.' The making free of the Spirit, and the deliverance from the power of sin, and the song of thanks to God is the continuous experience of the power of the endless life as maintained by the Spirit of Christ. As I am led of the Spirit, I am not under the law. Its spirit of bondage, its weakness through the flesh, and the sense of condemnation and wretchedness it works, are cast out by the liberty of the Spirit.

If there is one lesson the believer needs to learn, who would enjoy the full indwelling of the Spirit, it is the one taught in this passage with such force: that the law, the flesh, that self-effort are all utterly impotent in enabling us to serve God. It is the Spirit within, taking the place of the law without, that leads us into the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.'

Beloved Lord Jesus! I humbly ask Thee to make clear to me the blessed secret of the life of the Spirit. Teach me what it is that we are become dead to the law, so that our service of God is no longer in the oldness of the letter. And what that we are married to Another, even to Thyself, the Risen One, through whom we bring forth fruit unto God, serving in the newness of the Spirit.

Blessed Lord! with deep shame do I confess the sin of my nature, that 'in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing,' that 'I am carnal, sold under sin.' I do bless Thee, that in answer to the cry, 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Thou hast taught me to answer, 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.' 'The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death.'

Blessed Master ! teach me now to serve Thee in the newness and the liberty, the ever-fresh gladness of the Spirit of life. Teach me to yield myself in large and wholehearted faith to that Holy Spirit, that my life may indeed be in the glorious liberty of the children of God, in the power of an indwelling Saviour working in me both to will and to do, even as the Father did work in Him. Amen.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/andrew-murray/the-newness-of-the-spirit/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net