

Infirmities of the Spirit

by Harmon A. Baldwin

The sermon discusses the concept of infirmities of the spirit, limitations of spiritual power, and the importance of understanding the standard of holiness.

Scripture: Proverbs 4:23, Matthew 5:48, Romans 3:23, Romans 7:18, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Philippians 3:12, Hebrews 12:14, James 3:2, 1 Peter 1:15, 1 John 1:8

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Sanctification"

Description

Harmon A. Baldwin delves into the infirmities of the spirit, emphasizing how wrong judgments can lead to incorrect words, actions, and affections, causing a chain reaction of spiritual shortcomings. He highlights the distinction between 'infirmities' and 'sins,' focusing on the involuntary lack of power in the sanctified soul. Baldwin challenges the notion of placing the standard of holiness too high or too low, leading to unmet expectations and doctrinal errors hindering spiritual growth. He questions the limitations of human spiritual power and the failure to fully accomplish God's will, using Jesus as an example of unmet desires and the struggle to reach hearts.

Transcript

III. Infirmities of the spirit. Concerning infirmities of the spirit, Wesley says:

From wrong judgments, wrong words and actions will necessarily flow; and, in some cases, wrong affections may also spring from the same source. I may judge wrong of you; I may think more or less highly of you than I ought to think; and this mistake in my judgment may not only cause something wrong in my behavior, it may have a still deeper effect; it may occasion something wrong in my affection. From a wrong apprehension, I will love and esteem you either more or less than I ought. Nor can I be freed from a liability to such a mistake while I remain in a corruptible body. A thousand infirmities, in consequence of this, will attend my spirit, till it returns to God who gave it. And, in numberless instances, it comes short of doing the will of God, as Adam did in Paradise.

At first thought one who is accustomed, and properly so, to have a high ideal of the perfections of holiness will be shocked when it is stated that there are infirmities which still remain with the sanctified soul. When we say "infirmities" we do not mean "sins," but that which Fletcher calls "involuntary lack of power." Apply this definition to the specific manifestations of your own spiritual life and activities and perhaps you will begin to realize its justice.

So few ever trouble themselves to search into the deep things of the Spirit, and are so accustomed to accept as law and gospel and to take into their theological creed every peculiar experimental speculation of their teachers, that they are apt to be surprised when they are told that they have placed the standard of holiness too high or too low, and that one reason for their inability to stand is their errors in doctrine. Fletcher says:

Some people aim at Christian perfection, but, mistaking it for angelic perfection, they shoot above the mark, miss it, and then peevishly give up their hopes. Others place the mark too low: hence it is that you hear them profess to have attained Christian perfection when they have not so much as attained the serenity of a philosopher, or the candor of a good-natured, conscientious heathen.

Concerning infirmities of the spirit, the first thing we notice is that there is a limit to the spiritual power or ability (in the human agent) to accomplish things. Who among us has succeeded in saving as many souls or doing as much good as he would? The person who has certainly does not have a very high standard, at least not as high as some who will not be satisfied unless they see the world bowing at Jesus' feet Again we quote from Fletcher:

If we consider our lord Jesus Himself as a man, did He do all the good He would while He was upon earth? Did He preach as successfully as His perfect love made Him desire to do? If He had all the success He desired in His ministry, why did He look round about upon His hearers 'with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts'? Why did He weep and complain, 'How often would I have gathered you,' etc., 'and ye would not?' Were even His private instructions so blessed to His own disciples as He could have wished? If they were, what meant these strange expostulations? 'How is it that ye have no faith?' 'Faithless generation, how long shall I be with you?' 'Hast thou been so long with me, Philip, and yet hast thou not known me?' 'Will ye also go away?' "

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