

Spiritual-Mindedness

by J.C. Philpot

Spiritual-mindedness is a state of mind that is characterized by a desire to please God and to live according to His will, and it is the opposite of carnality, which is a state of mind that is opposed to the Spirit of God and leads to death.

Scripture: Psalm 25:14, Psalm 34:8, Psalm 37:4, Malachi 3:16, Romans 8:6, 1 Corinthians 6:17, Revelation 8:3

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Holy Spirit"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches about the importance of spiritual-mindedness, contrasting the death that comes from being carnally minded with the life and peace found in being spiritually minded. He emphasizes the rarity of true spiritual communion and the dangers of worldly conformity and carnality in conversations. Philpot highlights the necessity of having the heart and affections drawn up to heaven, loving Jesus, and experiencing a spiritual union with the saints of God. He warns against mere professions of faith and formalities, stressing that true life and peace come from living under the blessed power and influence of the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

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"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." (Romans 8:6)

When was there ever more worldly conformity than now? When was there ever more carnality in conversation, more backbiting, slander, idle gossip, tittle-tattling from house to house, levity and froth indulged in without scruple or shame? so that a little feeling, experimental, savory communion with the saints of God, such as profits and edifies the soul, creates and cements a spiritual union, draws the heart upwards to heaven, and makes us love Jesus and the image of Jesus in his people, is almost unknown.

In ancient times, "those who feared the Lord spoke often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him." (Mal. 3:16.) Their conversation was such as the Lord could hearken to, and record in his book. But would the Lord hearken to and record the conversation of most professors now, the main object of which is to exalt themselves and depreciate others; and under a thin veil of religious phraseology, put on to blind others and deceive themselves,

display little else but the pride and worldliness of their hearts? When was there more general deadness and darkness in the churches, and so little life and power in the pulpit and pew? When were experimental men of God more scarce, and more despised and depreciated; or mere 'prating ministers', who have a gift to speak, but who give little evidence that they either know or love the truth of God, so many and so popular?

But let men say what they will, or be what they may, let thousands combine to lower the sacred things of God to their own sunken level, it still stands a fixed, immutable truth, fixed as the throne of God, immutable as the great self-existent I AM, that "to be carnally-minded is death"--death total in the unregenerate, death partial when the living soul is under its power and influence. And if death total in the unregenerate, it entails all the awful penalties and punishments of death, if life from God does not eventually quicken.

Therefore no mere profession, no formal creed, no sitting under a gospel ministry, no church-membership or partaking of ordinances, no name to live while dead, will rescue from the second death, from the worm that does not die--and the fire that is not quenched, those who are carnally-minded, whatever be their profession, whether of the highest Calvinism or the most groveling Arminianism.

But "to be spiritually-minded"--to live and walk under the blessed power and influence of the Holy Spirit, to have the heart and affections drawn up from this poor, vain scene to where Jesus sits at the right hand of God, this is "life," the life of God in the soul, with all its present blessedness and all its future glory, and "peace," for peace and rest are alone to be found in this path of union and communion with a glorified Redeemer. In this sweet spirituality of mind--in these heavenly affections--in this communion with the Lord at his own throne of grace--the life and power of godliness much consist. Unless the heart be engaged in it, religion is heavy, dragging work. Prayer, reading, meditation, preaching, hearing, conversation with the saints, all are "a burden to the weary beast" when the power and life of God are not in them, when the heart is cold and dead, and not under some sensible influence from the courts of heaven.

But when a sweet and sacred influence rests upon the soul, when there is a felt union and communion with the Lord of life and glory, when a word from his lips, into which grace is poured, touches and softens the heart; and faith, viewing his beauty and blessedness, grace and glory, love and blood, sympathy and suitability, takes hold of his strength and says, "I will not let you go except you bless me," and he condescends to unveil his lovely face; then there is a lifting up of the heart and affections to the merciful and compassionate High Priest over the house of God. The lusts and evils which cling to the body of sin and death, as the viper to Paul's hand, then drop off into the fire of godly jealousy, "the coals whereof are coals of fire, which has a most vehement flame" against all that God hates; pride and covetousness, fretfulness and murmuring, evil tempers and carking cares, and a thousand God-dishonoring anxieties, hide their hateful heads; unbelief and infidelity, and a whole black troop of doubts and fears are put to the rout; and the Prince of Peace reigns and rules as the soul's only rightful and loved Lord.

Sweet, seasons, but, alas! how transient; how soon fresh clouds gather, fresh storms arise, fresh lusts work, and fresh foes start up from every ambush to try faith and hope and patience, and cast a dark cloud over the soul! We trust we know, from what we have felt in our own bosom, what this sweet spiritual-mindedness is, and what are its blessed effects. It is a key to unlock the Scriptures, for then we read them under the same sacred influence, and by the same divine teaching by which they were written; it is a door of prayer, for under these calm and peaceful emotions the soul, as if instinctively and necessarily, seeks holy communion with God; it is the fruitful parent of sweet meditation, for the truth of God is then thought over, fed upon, and is found to be bread from heaven--it is the secret of all life and

power in preaching, for unless the heart be engaged in, and melted and softened by the truth delivered, there will be a hardness in its delivery which will make itself sensibly felt by the living hearer. And it is the power of all spiritual conversation, for how can we talk with any unction or profit unless we are spiritually-minded, and in that frame of soul wherein the things of God are our chief element--the language of our lips, because the delight of our soul?

But to be otherwise--to be carnally-minded on our knees, with the Bible open before our eyes, in the house of prayer, at the Lord's table, in the company of the family of God--what a burden to our spirit, what a condemnation to our conscience, what a parent of doubt and fear whether matters can be right between God and our own soul, when there is such a distance between him and us! And of all poor miserable wretches, felt or not felt, a carnally-minded minister must be the worst. Death in the pulpit must engender death in the pew. A minister stands there as an instrument in the hands of God to comfort and encourage the drooping hearts of his people, to strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees, to be a means of communicating life to the dead, and reviving the living. But if dead himself, totally dead, can he communicate life to others? And if "as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed," like Miriam when struck by leprosy--a saved man sunk into carnality and death, and that not deeply felt or groaned under as a heavy load--how can he feed the church of the living God?

It is true that the most eminent saints and servants of God have their dead and dark seasons, when the life of God seems sunk to so low an ebb as to be hardly visible--so hidden is the stream by the mud-banks of their fallen nature. Still it glides onward, around them, if not through them--and sometimes a beam of light falls upon it from above, as it threads its way toward the ocean of eternal love, which manifests not only its existence but its course, and that it gives back to heaven the ray it receives from heaven. No, by these very dark and dead seasons, the saints and servants of God are instructed. They see and feel what the flesh really is, how alienated from the life of God; they learn in whom all their strength and sufficiency lie; they are taught that in them, that is, in their flesh, dwells no good thing; that no exertions of their own can maintain in strength and vigor the life of God; and that all they are, and have, all they believe, know, feel, and enjoy, with all their ability, usefulness, gifts, and grace--flow from the pure, sovereign grace, the rich, free, undeserved--yet unceasing goodness and mercy of God! They learn in this hard school of painful experience their emptiness and nothingness, and that without Christ indeed they can do nothing. They thus become clothed with humility--that rare, yet lovely garb; cease from their own strength and wisdom, and learn experimentally that Christ is, and ever must be, all in all to them, and all in all in them.

"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." (Romans 8:6)

We do not view spiritual-mindedness as a habitual state of the regenerated soul, but one brought forth under special influences, and therefore subject to fluctuations.

The meaning of the apostle in Romans 8:6 is simply this--that the mind, the breath, the bent and inclination of the new man of grace, is "life," as its main element, and "peace," as the result and fruit of life. In other words, the new man of grace, that "spirit," (John 3:6, Rom. 8:16, Ezek. 36:26,) which is born of the Spirit possesses "life" as its animating, operating principle; and as this life is from Christ and unites to Christ, it enjoys "peace" from its union and communion with him.

But the apostle does not lay it down as a certain fixed principle that the soul of a believer is always spiritually-minded, and that therefore, he always enjoys life and peace. He is, on the contrary, drawing the distinction between the flesh and the spirit in a believer, and showing the essential difference between the

two. The one is death, the other life; the one is enmity, the other peace; the one not subject to the law of God, the other obedient to his will and word; the one displeasing to God, the other pleasing in his sight.

Thence he argues that all men walk, that is, think, speak, live, and act, according to the one or the other; and that those who "walk after the flesh," that is, follow out its movements, desires, and dictates, are dead, at enmity with God, disobedient, and therefore displeasing to him; while those who "walk after the spirit" possess and manifest divine life, enjoy peace with God, obey his precepts, and are pleasing in his sight.

But the question may occur to a sincere child of God who knows and feels much of his barrenness, darkness, and death, whether he is or can be spiritually-minded, when he is so rarely in the enjoyment of it, and is often so far from the life and peace which are its attendant fruits. Here great wisdom and holy caution are needed to give a right answer. Many a wretched, carnal, dead professor takes comfort from hearing that the real child of God has his seasons of deadness and coldness, not thinking or caring to think that it is one thing to be always dead, and another to be so sometimes; one thing to see it, and another to feel and mourn under it. How many there are in the professing church "who bless themselves in their heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." (Deut. 29:19.) These are they who feast with the children of God, "feeding themselves without fear," when they are but "clouds without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withers, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots." (Jude 12.) Much wisdom, therefore, and caution are needed not to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs; on the one hand not to make the heart of the righteous sad, and on the other not to strengthen the hands of the wicked by promising him life when all his ways are ways of death. (Ezek. 13:22.)

Have we not all much reason to lament our coming short of this sweet and blessed spirituality of mind? Yet how can we know what it is unless we have felt it, or at least some measure of it, in our own hearts? Those dead in sin and the dead in a profession neither know it nor care to know it. It is the living family of God alone who know its blessedness and sweetness, for they alone are born of the Spirit, and therefore walk after it, mind it, and enjoy it. And yet, what life there is in it, when felt! It is the only real happiness the child of God enjoys here below; his companion in solitude, his support in affliction, his comfort in sickness, and his peace in death. For if it be "life," to have it must be an inward well of water springing up in his soul; (John 4:14;) and if it be "peace," it is the enjoyment of Christ's own best gift and last legacy. In fact, in it are all the life and peace of religion, and without it religion is but a name and a notion, without present grace or future glory. How sweet, at such moments, is the word of God! What light shines upon the sacred page! what wisdom and truth appear in every line! what a fullness, blessedness, and unction drop from it, like honey from the honeycomb!

Such was Jeremiah's feeling--"Your words were found, and ate them; and your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart--for I am called by your name, O Lord God Almighty." (Jer. 15:16.) Such was David's experience--"How sweet are your words unto my taste! yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Ps. 119:103.) Why is this, but because we are then taught by the same Spirit under whose inspiration the Scriptures were written, and are under the same influences and the same holy anointing?

How sweet, then, is prayer! It is the language of the heart, the ascending breath of the soul, the spiritual sacrifice laid upon the golden altar, and ascends with the incense of the great and glorious Intercessor. (Rev. 8:3, 4.) How sweet, then, is meditation, as spiritual thoughts roll in upon the mind, spiritual feelings fill the soul, and spiritual affections warm and melt the heart. This is to delight oneself in the Lord, (Ps. 37:4, Isa. 58:14,) to feel that the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, (Prov. 3:17,) to taste and see

that the Lord is good, (Ps. 34:8,) to find how near, dear, and precious Christ is to those who believe, (1 Pet. 2:7) and to see with every look of faith more and more of his beauty and blessedness. No company is now wanted but the Lord's company; and the more the heart is drawn up towards him, the more it receives out of his fullness.

Here is life--the life of all religion, and of all ordinances, preaching, praying, hearing, reading, conversing--spiritual-mindedness is the life of them all. Without it all is death in the pulpit and in the pew. You may have eloquence, ability, sound doctrine, texts by scores, and anecdotes by handfuls; you may have voice, rant, and gesture; and all this may pass for wonderful preaching, when there is not a grain of spiritual life in the man or his ministry. And you may have admiring hearers in the pew, full of vows, promises, and tears, and yet not one grain of divine life in the heart. True religion is "a secret"--it lies between God and the soul; and this secret, which is with those who fear God, (Ps. 25:14,) is having the Spirit and mind of Christ; (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 2:16;) and thus being "one spirit" with him, as joined to him by this holy tie. (1 Cor. 6:17.)

This brings "peace." Enmity and war cannot exist between friends, and the Lord says to his disciples, "you are my friends." He himself is our peace. It comes through his blood, for by it he has made peace. Spiritual-mindedness implies reconciliation, a being brought near; union and communion, and a resting on the atoning blood and finished work of the Son of God.

The Lord graciously bestow upon us much of this spiritual-mindedness, and thus make us fit for the inheritance of the saints in light; for without holiness, of which this is a main part, no man shall see the Lord.

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