

The Cross and Life in the Spirit

by Jessie Penn-Lewis

The sermon explores the concept of the human spirit and its relationship with the Holy Spirit, emphasizing the importance of walking after the spirit and the work of the Cross in reversing the results of the Fall.

Scripture: John 7:37, Acts 4:8, Romans 7:6, Romans 8:16, Romans 12:11, 1 Corinthians 2:11, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Philippians 1:9, Colossians 1:9-11, 1 Thessalonians 5:23

Topics: "Life in the Spirit", "The Cross"

Description

Jessie Penn-Lewis emphasizes the transformative power of the Cross and the role of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life. She explains that through the Cross, believers experience a newness of spirit, allowing them to connect deeply with God and understand His will. The sermon highlights the distinction between the human spirit and the Holy Spirit, urging believers to cleanse their spirits and be led by the Spirit in their daily lives. Penn-Lewis encourages a fervent spirit that expresses itself in service and testimony, emphasizing the importance of spiritual discernment and obedience to the Holy Spirit's guidance.

Transcript

We have died . . . new service of the Spirit" Romans 7: 6

THIS morning when speaking of the life side of the Cross, we were more occupied with the word 'life' than the word 'Spirit'. On the life, or resurrection side of the Cross, we have seen there is the joining of the spirit to the Spirit of Christ, for "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit". In the early days of my Christian life I thought that everything that took place in my spirit was the action of the Holy Spirit, not understanding clearly all that the Bible says about the human spirit. Let us trace it out.

1. There is a human spirit. I Corinthians 2: 1 1 shows this clearly. "Who can know what belongs to man, but the spirit of man which is within him?" i.e., who can know what is going on within us, but the spirit which is within us? "Even so," says the Apostle, "none can know what belongs to God, but the Spirit of God alone." Even as others can only know our inmost thoughts as we choose to reveal them, so we can only know God as His Spirit reveals Him. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might understand those things which have been freely given us by God." We see by this passage that there is a 'spirit of man,' which knows the man, as the 'Spirit of God' knows the 'depths of God'. Also that God gives to men who will receive Him, His Spirit, so that by His Spirit they may be enabled to understand the things of God-things which they could not know apart from the teaching of His Spirit.

2. The spirit of man is a distinct entity or organism (I Corinthians 5: 4)"You convene an assembly, and when you, and my spirit with you, are gathered together. . . ." Here is Paul talking about his own spirit being present with the assembled believers in Corinth. Here we have the fact of there being a spirit of man as a distinct entity, or organism. Again in I Corinthians 14: 14, Paul says, "If I utter prayers in a tongue, my spirit indeed prays, but my understanding bears no fruit". So 'spirit' and mind, or understanding, are not the same thing! "My spirit prays" says the Apostle, apart entirely from the 'soul'--or understanding. This shows that there is prayer which takes place only in the spirit, without the 'understanding' of what the prayer is about (see Romans 8:26), and without expression by the voice, or 'feelings' of the body. So, the Apostle says, "I will pray indeed with my spirit, but I will pray with my understanding also; I will sing praises with my spirit, but I will sing with my understanding also". This prayer in the spirit is not of value to others gathered in a meeting, "For if thou, with thy spirit, offerest praise" only, "how shall the Amen be said" by others who are present? The 'understanding' prayer is needed in the assembly.

3. The varied characteristics of the spirit. Now look at the varied expressions which are used concerning the spirit. These characteristics may belong to the spirit of man itself, or be brought about in it by the action of the Holy Spirit. Romans 12: 11 speaks of a 'fervent' spirit. Something quite different to 'enthusiasm' or fervour in the soul. The 'fervent' spirit is the same in a revival meeting, and in the cold drudgery of daily life. It is this fervency that the world misses in the children of God. People have the counterfeit of it in the things of the world, stirred by the life of nature: surely the children of God should have it from the source of the Spirit of God, setting their spirits on fire. Then it would come out in every detail of life-in action and service, even in handshaking-which can be the warm, heartening, expression of a fervent spirit. We are needing sorely, in a selfish world, an intensity which comes from a true fervency of spirit.

In Corinthians 7: 13, Paul says that the 'spirit' of Titus had been 'refreshed' by seeing the zeal (fervency) of the Corinthian believers in the things of God. Some of you are getting your spirits 'refreshed' here! Again in Acts 18:5, we read that Paul was 'pressed in spirit' to 'testify to the Jews that Jesus was Christ'. This shows the action of the Holy Spirit in the man's spirit urging him to a certain course of action. It is when testimony, or preaching, has its source in this pressure of the spirit-not merely the impulse or emotion of the soul that there are eternal results in blessing to those who are prepared by the Holy Spirit to respond to it. Sometimes the pressure in the spirit is so strong that the man can hardly breathe until the 'testimony' is given. Those who know the active in-working of the Holy Ghost learn to recognize His working in them in this way, and how to discern all that is spurious, or arises from the counterfeit produced by Satan as an 'angel of light'.

In reference to this we have in Acts 20: 22 a remarkable passage, showing the way Paul was able to read the mind of the Holy Spirit, as made known in his own spirit. He said to the elders at Miletus, "As for me, behold I go to Jerusalem in spirit foredoomed to chains ... in every city the Holy Spirit gives the same testimony that bonds and afflictions abide in me". In his own spirit Paul knew that he was going forward into 'bonds', and knew this to be the testimony of the Holy Spirit in his spirit. Here is seen clearly the co-action of the Holy Spirit with the human spirit-the spirit of man as the organ, and the Spirit of God working in and through it. This pure spirit working is distinct from the soul (natural), or the life after the flesh, i.e., the emotional of the soul, or the 'feelings' of the body.

In Romans 1: 9, again we read "Whom I serve with the worship of my spirit". The Apostle knew the life of the spirit, not only as the organ through which the Holy Spirit moved him in prayer, in fervency, in testimony, but also in service to his Lord. This does not mean that the spirit is not under the man's control. That it always is so is seen in I Corinthians 14: 32, where Paul says that the gift of prophecy does not take

from the prophets the control of their own spirits. They have not control over the Holy Spirit of course, but the man has control over his own spirit in its co-action with the Spirit of God, for the Holy Spirit does not deprive the redeemed soul of his freedom of action and decision of will to voluntarily work with God.

4. The work to be done in the spirit of man: In Romans 7: 6, the Apostle speaks about 'newness of spirit'. "A new spirit will I put within you" was the promise of God to Israel, made through Ezekiel, long before the time of Paul. The new birth therefore, or regeneration, takes place in the spirit. The spirit of man by nature is a fallen spirit. It is 'spirit', but it is separate from God-in darkness and emptiness. It is consequently open to the spirits of Satan, and able to give place to evil spirits and become their medium of communication with others. But in the new birth the spirit is brought back to God by regeneration, and man is given again power to know God.

In 2 Corinthians 7: 1, we read "Having these promises (i.e., the indwelling of God, ch. 6: 16-18) ... let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement, either of flesh or spirit". Here we see that the 'spirit' can be defiled. There are sins of the spirit. For the indwelling of God it is necessary to have a spirit without guile. "Blessed is the man in whose spirit there is no guile . . .," no duplicity, no mixture. This is enough to show that the spirit needs cleansing. And the believer is to do this, by acknowledging these sins, applying to God to have them dealt with by the Cross, and by putting them away. We are to 'cleanse ourselves', not only from the defilement of the flesh, but of the spirit. What may we describe as sins of the spirit? Take, for example, a jealous spirit, an unkind spirit, a crooked spirit. You may trace all these in the Bible. In the Psalms and Proverbs you will find all kinds of things said about the spirit. And alas! when there are sins of the spirit, they invite the evil spirits to become attached to the man's spirit. For example: when a man has a jealous spirit, an evil spirit of jealousy takes hold of him and dominates him, so that he loses all control of himself. The most mischievous things of life are those that come from the spirit. We prove this perpetually in daily life. You say: If the man's spirit is all right we can get on! And it is so. Mistakes and blunders of judgment and action can all be put right, but when the spirit is wrong-all is wrong. "Lord, cleanse my heart" you say. But we consist of more than 'hearts'. The heart is the seat of the affections. It is true that out of the heart are the issues of life, and the heart is described as the 'reins' of man, for he is governed by his affections. But the heart may be right, and the 'spirit' still needs cleaning from, for example, 'guile'! How few are 'without guile', i.e., without mixture-without 'suspicion' of others-without duplicity, saying something they do not mean; pretending something they do not feel. There are people with a suspicious spirit, always watching for, and expecting something wrong. They cannot believe anything good. They have not a spirit 'without guile'! How beautiful it is not to be looking for evil, and to take what others say with purity of spirit! Not thinking always that others have ulterior motives. How quickly conscious a sensitive spirit is of this spirit among God's people. Oh, that we may put away this thing, and have a spirit 'without guile'.

In the light of this you will now see why the 'spirit' needs to be divided from the soul. This must be emphasized again here. "The Word of God is quick and powerful ... piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit." This is the deepest work to be done by the Word of God for the renewal of the believer through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. We have already seen that before the Fall, as God created man, the spirit was the dominant power, ruling the soul-the personality of the man-for the expression of the life of God, with the body as the slave. Then we see how man fell so that the flesh ruled instead of the spirit (Genesis 6: 3, 6). Then how the Son of God came, and as the Representative Man, took the fallen Adam to the Cross, where in its stead He suffered the penalty of death for sin, and in Him the fallen Adam died. "If One died for all-then all died" (2 Corinthians 5: 14) Now the work of the Spirit through the Word of God is to apply the Lord Christ's finished work on the Cross to every man, and reverse the results of the

Fall. The spirit of man, joined to the Risen Lord, is to be again the ruling power, governing the 'soul', controlling the mind, the emotions and dispositions, and then the body the obedient vehicle (Romans 6:13) at the command of God through the new creation'. This is the meaning of the Cross. The precious blood cleanses the heart, the affections, but the Cross deals with the old creation.

Someone asks me, Is there not a difference between the 'flesh' and the 'old man'? The Word of God throws light on this. In some passages we find Paul speaking of the 'flesh' as purely 'flesh and blood'. "Though living in 'the flesh', my warfare is not waged according to 'the flesh' " (2 Corinthians 10: 3), he writes. So in this sense we are 'in the flesh', even when the 'old man' is crucified. But the Apostle adds that even though we are thus "living in the flesh", we are not to act "according to the flesh", but "according to God in the spirit". "Living in the flesh," in a right sense, is not to be an excuse for yielding to it, or being governed by it in any degree.

Now let us look at I Thessalonians 5: 23, giving a summary of the work to be done in the believer, as the outcome of the finished work of Christ on the Cross. "May the God of Peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul, and body all together be preserved blameless, at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." Note the order: spirit first, then soul, then body. Note the word 'sanctify'-set you apart altogether for God, and keep you blameless.

5. The working of the Holy Spirit in the spirit of man: A passage in Romans 8: 16 very clearly shows this aspect of the spiritual life. "The Spirit bears witness with our own spirit that we are the children of God." This is not the 'understanding' or the mind. The Holy Spirit gives His witness in our spirits. Look at Ephesians 3: 16, "He would grant you strength by the entrance of His Spirit into your inner man". This is, says Moule, "Deep in it, penetrating far into it [the], the regenerate human spirit. . . ." Here is the truth made clear. The Holy Spirit dwells and works in the human spirit. It is His shrine, and His place of abode. He desires to penetrate far into it, so as to produce, shall I say, the fusion of the regenerate human spirit with the Spirit of Christ, for the sole object of the working of the Spirit of God in us is to unite us to Christ, and to bring about in us conformity to His likeness.

6. A Bible picture of a 'spiritual' man: For this we turn again to I Corinthians 2: 1 1. The 'spiritual' man has an acute 'spirit' sense. He knows the action of his spirit, and by his spirit knows all about himself. It is only when a man becomes really 'spiritual', with the 'soul' divided from his spirit (ie.. the mixture of mental and spiritual separated), that this is realized. The majority of people are in a 'fantasy', as an old writer says, about themselves. The mental perception is unable to penetrate into the depths of 'yourself' and make you know yourself as you really are. The man's own spirit, unmixed with the intellect, 'knows' himself, and he receives the Holy Spirit into his spirit that he may know God (verse 12).

Then the spiritual man, with the Holy Spirit dwelling in his spirit, is given a spirit-faculty which enables him to understand the things of God, and to explain them to others. "These are things whereof we speak, in words not taught by man's wisdom, but by the Spirit, explaining spiritual things to spiritual men." The R.V. says "comparing spiritual things with spiritual", and the R.V. margin 'combining', and 'interpreting'. Conybeare says 'explaining', and in the R.V. margin of verse 15 we have the word 'examining'-the Greek meaning being 'to investigate and decide'. Now if we put all these renderings together, you have a striking description of the spiritual man in his dealing with the 'things of God' showing, too, that God desires us not only to trust Him, but to understand Him, and that the Holy Spirit is given to us with this object. Practically it means that when the man's spirit is actually 'joined' with the Risen Lord, the Holy Spirit gives him a spirit sense, or faculty, whereby he is able to compare, or 'examine' spiritual things, and 'combine' spiritual facts

with spiritual. As the chemist in his laboratory compares, combines, examines, searches, so the spiritual man deals with spiritual things, combining, comparing, explaining, interpreting, examining; e.g., he 'investigates' the spiritual causes of spiritual phenomena until he is able to 'decide' their source! But where are the spiritual men able to do this in this perilous time? Ability to deal with the 'letter' of the Scriptures there may be, but alas, alas, how few can handle the 'things of the spirit' so as to be able to interpret these 'things' to others.

I have been feeling lately the responsibility of those who know the Scriptures in the original Greek. Most of the errors among God's children come from a misuse of faulty translations of the original. And with all the aids to non-Greek readers available to-day, they do not take trouble to search, examine, and investigate what the Godbreathed Word says in the language used by the Holy Ghost. Oh that men who know the original Scriptures took trouble to explain the things of God to those who do not know the Greek language. There are deep wells of life from God, and fathomless depths of the deep things of God, hidden away in 'roots' of the Greek original Scriptures. Undoubtedly God chose that language as the one in which He could best make known spiritual things to His redeemed ones. But let us be of good courage. The Holy Spirit can teach us. I was once in a company of Convention speakers, when they asked me about some passage in the Word, and I said, "I do not know Greek, but the Holy Ghost does!" I have been amazed to find that when spiritual things have been opened to me truly by Him, they have always proved to be in harmony with the Greek original. This gave me confidence, and greater reliance upon the Holy Spirit to open to me the true meaning of the Word. It also made me careful not to say a certain verse meant this or that, until I was given His light upon it. Then when He truly gave the light, I have never found that those who knew the Greek could contradict what the Holy Ghost had opened. It made me careful also to search the Word of God, and to use every possible help for the understanding of the original. There are many such 'helps' to-day. If we honestly want to know what God says, and are willing to be delivered from human 'views' of the Word, He will teach us.

The primary condition on our part is to have the work of the Cross wrought in us, even to the 'dividing of soul and spirit', so that we may have an acute spirit-sense, for you can 'sense' the meaning of some deep thing of God which you cannot grasp with your intellect. Some call this 'intuition', but it is more than that, for the intuition of the unregenerate does not open to them the things of God. The 'intuition' of the spiritual man comes from the human spirit indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It appears then that the 'mind' and spirit become one, or else it is that the Holy Spirit penetrates the mind, clarifying and illuminating it, so that it loses its earth-born character. Possibly this is what the Apostle meant when he said "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind". The intellect then becomes spiritual. For it is with the mind that we perceive, and with the 'spirit' that we 'know', or 'feel' or sense the things of God. Paul is an example of this. He had one of the most brilliant intellects of his age, and of all later ages. But in the things of God, his intellect had been renewed and inter-penetrated by the Holy Spirit until he 'combined', 'compared' and 'interpreted' the things of God, unknown, and unreachable, by the unregenerate man.

When truth thus comes to the teacher, who is taught of God, it is borne witness to in the consciences of those you speak to. It need not be forced upon any one by the speaker, for the Holy Ghost does His own work, and bears witness to His own Word.

7. The laws of the spirit; and how to walk after the spirit: (a) First there is the minding of the things of the Spirit. See Romans 8: 5-6, "They who live after the flesh mind fleshly things, but they who live after spirit"-the article is not there in the original-"mind spiritual things; and the fleshly mind is death; but the spiritual mind is life and peace". The secret of walking after the spirit is, briefly, to 'mind' the spirit, and put

spiritual things first. As we do this, it means that you never lose consciousness of what is going on in your spirit. Madame Guyon has a helpful illustration of what it means to abide in Christ. She says when you enter a room you say how pleasant and warm it is, but as you stay in it you have no 'consciousness' save of ease. But go into the cold outside and you will soon know that you are not 'abiding' in the room. Walking in the spirit, and minding the spirit, therefore, does not always mean any consciousness in the senses, but a keen intuitive knowledge of God and His will. It is not a life of great spirit phenomena, but of quiet rest in God in the common things of daily life. The believer thus 'minding the spirit' ceases to be governed by 'circumstances', and to measure external acts by their external values. Your great and blessed rest lies in simply and quietly doing the will of God, for in the life of union with God, the soul cheerfully, gladly, does the common every-day things, with the same fervency of spirit as he would do what; is called 'the Lord's work'.

(b) Then there is the being obedient to the monitions of the Spirit. "All who are led by God's Spirit, and they alone, are the sons of God" (Romans 8: 14). The Spirit of God leads those who are truly sons of God-begotten in the Divine Nature-by various workings in the human spirit, such as impressions, drawings, restrainings, assurance in prayer, and inward witness to an action being in the will of God. All these monitions of the Holy Spirit in the spirit of the believer, are very delicate and subtle, but they can be known and read as the life in the spirit becomes stronger, and less mixed with the emotions and impulses of the soul, or the activities of the mind. This subject in all its ramifications would take too much time to deal with now, but as one example, suppose you are asked to do a certain thing, but you find that in your spirit there is a sense of deadness toward that course. It is then always safe to wait and pray for more light. The inner 'restraint' generally means God's 'No'. You go into a meeting where strange and abnormal manifestations are taking place. In your spirit there is a shrinking and a repugnance. It is never safe to go against this, and always safe not to force yourself to accept supernatural things. "As many as are led" writes the Apostle. The Spirit of God does not force, but leads the obedient child of God, so gently, that only when he is quiet and still he is conscious of it. Another very important point in obeying the monitions of the Holy Spirit, is not to act in anything without deliberate volition. If there is in your spirit any 'impression' or 'drawing' to this or that, it must never be followed without your having examined it in the light of the Word of God, and come to deliberate intelligent decision that it is of God.

(c) There is also a need of knowledge of God, and His ways of working. In Philippians 1: 9, we read, "This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in true knowledge, and in all understanding, teaching you to distinguish good from evil". The Holy Spirit can give us this 'understanding' so that we may be able to distinguish good from evil in our path. Colossians 1 : 9-11 again speaks of this as a necessity for walking worthy of God.

(d) A very important law of the spirit-life is that of 'expression'. This we find in John 7: 37- "He that believeth into Me ... out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This spake He of the Spirit. . . ." Briefly, if there is an influx, there must be an 'outflow'. Many of the Lord's children are suffering from 'suppressed spirit'. just as you would suffer if you had no physical exercise, so the spirit suffers if it has no 'outflow' or 'exercise'. The spirit life in us must have expression, or it becomes passive and feeble. When it is in normal activity the life in it 'overflows' easily-quite a different thing to the talkativeness of the life of nature. We get a gleam into this in what is said of Peter in Acts 4: 8. "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them. . . ." There was a fresh influx of the Spirit of God into his spirit, and out in bold testimony. 'Out' of you shall 'flow rivers of living water'. We shall never have a fuller spiritual life than the extent to which we pour out that life to others. This hindering 'reserve' which is locking up the spirit in so many, needs

breaking down. It produces a conflict in service for God which you need not have. Ask therefore for the fulness of the Spirit in your spirit, and then ,give', and it shall again be given unto you.

(e) Lastly there is the use of the spirit in spiritual conflict: We have already dealt with this as part of the life on the resurrection side of the Cross. The Holy Spirit will teach us the true use of the spirit in conflict, for He alone can show us how to distinguish the things that differ, in the spiritual realm. I will only say that the use of the spirit only, makes the believer very quiet in conflict. The victory is often won by a quiet and simple word. It is the Holy Spirit that makes the spirit strong to stand against opposing powers.

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