

The Spiritual Christian

by Jessie Penn-Lewis

The spiritual Christian is one in whom the Triune God dwells in the spirit, soul, and body, and is perfected in love and fellowship with other believers.

Scripture: Romans 6:13, Romans 8:11, 1 Corinthians 2:15, 1 Corinthians 9:27, 2 Corinthians 5:4, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 4:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 6:1, 1 John 4:18

Topics: "Spiritual Maturity", "Discernment in the Spirit"

Description

Jessie Penn-Lewis emphasizes the significance of being a 'spiritual' Christian, highlighting the tripartite nature of man as spirit, soul, and body. She explains that true spirituality involves the spirit being governed by the Holy Spirit, leading to a life that is sanctified wholly and preserved blameless. The sermon discusses the transition from a soulish to a spiritual existence, where the believer's spirit is united with Christ, allowing for the manifestation of the fruits of the Spirit in their life. Penn-Lewis warns of the dangers that spiritual believers face, including the subtle influences of evil spirits and the need for discernment in their spiritual walk. Ultimately, she calls for believers to understand their identity in Christ and to live in the fullness of the Spirit, pressing on towards maturity in faith.

Transcript

(pneumatikos)

" He that is spiritual (pneumatikos) judgeth all things "

(I Corinthians 2:15).

" And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly: and may

your spirit (pneuma) and soul (psuche) and body (soma) be

preserved entire, without blame ... "

(I Thessalonians 5:23, R.V.).

In this passage in Thessalonians we have, as it has already been observed, one of the only two which in English plainly declare the tripartite nature of man, also describing it in the due-and original-order. It is remarkable how frequently the order is changed by many children of God, in the quotation of this verse in

Thessalonians, as they pray that they may be " sanctified, body, soul and spirit ", showing that the mind unconsciously describes the true conditions of the fallen creation, until the believer is illuminated by the Spirit of God and the spirit is brought back to its place of control, in thought, as well as all the other activities of the man.

The Apostle in his prayer for the Thessalonians gives comprehensively a picture of the " spiritual " believer, for he could pray no less for any of his converts than that they should be sanctified wholly ; just as he wrote to the Colossians that he laboured that he might present every man " perfect " or " full-grown " in Christ-the word he used, denoting " grown to the ripeness of maturity ". " I pray God," he says, " your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless " (A.V.). The being " preserved blameless ", or " entire " follows the being " sanctified wholly ". And this briefly means:

(1) As regards the spirit: The Triune God, Who is Spirit, taking up His abode in the shrine of the spirit of the man, who is first quickened in spirit by the Holy Spirit through the redemptive work of the Son.

(2) As regards the soul: The Triune God dwelling in the spirit manifesting Himself through the vessel of the soul or personality-of the man, in (a) a will wholly one with the will of God, (b) an intellect renewed and illuminated by the Holy Spirit, and (c) emotions under the complete control and usage of the man, guided by that same Spirit.

(3) As regards the body: The Triune God abiding in the spirit, manifesting Himself through the avenues of the soul, keeping the body under complete mastery (I Corinthians 9:27), with every member yielding quick obedience as a " weapon of righteousness " (Romans 6:13), thus making the outer man-the body-veryly a sanctuary of the Holy Ghost (I Corinthians 6:19).

This is the " spiritual " believer, grown to the " ripeness of maturity "; sanctified wholly in spirit, soul and body, and needing to be " preserved entire " and blameless-not faultless-by the God of Peace dwelling in the central shrine of his being.

How the soulish man becomes spiritual

But how, we may ask, does the believer pass from the "soulish " stage to become actually a " spiritual " man? " The ` spiritual' is the man distinguished above his fellowmen as he in whom the spirit rules," writes Fausset, and the " ruling of the spirit " does not only mean the Spirit of God ruling the carnal, or the soulish man, but the regenerate spirit made stronger than soul and body, so that it rules over both as it is indwelt and strengthened by the Spirit of God, according to the prayer of Paul for the Ephesians, that they might be " strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man "-i.e., the regenerate humanspirit (Bishop Mottle).

The " spiritual man " is he who " walks after the spirit " and " minds " the spirit-the spirit being thus so in co-working with the Holy Spirit, that the Life-giving Spirit of the Second Adam is able freely and fully to animate the faculties of the soul-i.e., mind, imagination, reason, judgment-quicken the members of the body (Romans 8:2)and manifest through them His fullest and highest will.

For this to come about, the believer must not only apprehend the negative side of God's dealing as depicted in Hebrews 4:12-the dividing of " soul " from " spirit "-but the positive side depicted in I Thessalonians 5:23, as the God of Peace " sanctifying " the whole, by taking possession of and working through the spirit, and seeing that the soul and body fulfil their proper functions.

" He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit " (I Corinthians 6:7), wrote the Apostle. " Ye also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ; that ye should be joined to another, even to Him Who was raised from the dead " (Romans 7: 4, R.V.). Here is set forth clearly the " joining " or union with Christ in the spirit, which is the purpose and outcome of the work of the Cross. This union with the Risen and Ascended Lord can be only in spirit, and EXPERIMENTALLY REALIZED as the SPIRIT OF THE BELIEVER IS SEPARATED FROM THE ENWRAPPING OF THE SOUL; for, as Stockmayer observes, the Risen Lord cannot be said to be the Bridegroom of the soul; the soul-the personality of the man-can only be the vessel through which the Lord manifests His own life, bringing forth, in union with the believer's spirit, " fruit unto God ".

The " spiritual " man, therefore, is one in whom, through the dividing of soul and spirit by the Word of God, the SPIRIT HAS BEEN FREED from the entanglement of the " soul ", or, as Bromley (who wrote in 1774.) says, raised out of its

"embrace" and joined to the Lord in union of essence-spirit with spirit-one spirit-so that the soul and body may serve as vehicles for the expression of the will, and life, and love of the Lord Himself through the believer.

In the light of this, the contrast between the " works " of the " flesh " and the "fruit " of the " Spirit ", described in Galatians 5:18-24, is very striking. The " flesh " works, and works out to the surface its repulsive manifestations; whilst in the man who knows the Romans 6 aspect of Calvary, the crucifixion of the flesh, and the dividing of soul from spirit by the Word of God, the spirit united to the Lord brings forth FRUIT-spontaneous manifestations of life in the form of fruit; fruit manifested in and through the soul (personality) in its various forms of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control.

The word " self-control " mentioned as one of the " fruits " of the Spirit, shows that the Spirit of God uses the " self "-personality or " soul " of the man as His means of control. The personality, as meaning self-or soul-is therefore not to be destroyed or suppressed, but ennobled as it becomes a vehicle for expressing the Spirit of Christ dwelling within. In brief, the " fruit of the Spirit ", in " love, joy, peace ", means love manifested through the " soul ", but derived from the Holy Spirit in the human spirit, instead of from the soul-life.

There are many passages in the Scriptures describing the various " soul " faculties in activity, and deriving their animation from the spirit. We read of the being "fervent in spirit " (Romans 12:11); the purposing in the spirit (Acts 19:21) ; the spirit of faith (2 Corinthians 4:13); love in the spirit (Colossians 1:8); all these spirit-activities being manifested through the avenue of the soul-the personality of the man: the " wisdom " through his mind; the "purposing " through his will; the " love " through his affectionate part; the "joy" through his emotional senses, but springing from the eternal depth of his spirit, and not merely from his senses alone.

The laws of the spirit life

It is at this stage that it is vitally important that the believer should know the laws of the spirit, and how to walk after the spirit, lest he fail to co-operate with the Holy Spirit, and give opportunity to the deceiving spirits of Satan to ensnare him with counterfeits of the true spirit-life, produced in the soul-realm, which he does not recognise as spurious, for their object is to draw him to walk unknowingly in the soul-sphere again. The spiritual man-with his spirit liberated, or " divided " from the soul-is one who walks by, or is

governed by the spirit, and not by his soul or body; but this does not mean that he cannot be entangled in the soul-life again, if, through ignorance of the laws of the spirit, he fails to let the spirit rule. He must know how to discern what is from the spirit, the soul or the body in his experience; how to keep the spirit free and open to the Spirit of God; and what condition of spirit is necessary for continuous co-operation with the Holy Spirit. He needs to be able to recognise, and deal with the attacks of evil spirit-beings upon his spirit to hinder fellowship with God; or to press it down into the soul, paralysing its action and causing passivity of spirit. Failing this, they will seek to drive his spirit beyond a sober activity-the entire object being to prevent or hinder continuous resistance of their attacks.

For walking after the spirit (1) the believer must know what is spirit, and how to give heed to the demands of the spirit, and not to quench it. A weight comes upon his spirit, but he goes on with his work, putting up with the pressure; he finds the work hard, but he has no time to investigate the cause, until at last the weight becomes unendurable, and he is forced to stop and see what is the matter, whereas he should have given heed to the claims of the spirit at the first, and in a brief prayer taken the " weight " to God, refusing all pressure from the foe.

(2) He should be able to read his spirit, and know at once when it is out of co-operation with the Holy Spirit, quickly refusing all attacks which are drawing his spirit out of the poise of fellowship with God.

(3) He should know when his spirit is touched by the poison of the spirits of evil; by the injection, for instance, of sadness, soreness, complaint, grumbling, fault-finding, touchiness, bitterness, feeling hurt, jealousy, etc.-all direct from the enemy to the spirit. He should resist all sadness, gloom, and grumbling injected into his spirit, for the victory life of a freed spirit means joyfulness (Galatians 5:22). This touching of the spirit by the various things just named is not the manifestation of the " works of the flesh ", when the believer is one who knows the life after the spirit; although they will quickly reach the sphere of the flesh if not recognized, and dealt with in sharp refusal and resistance.

(4) He should know when his spirit is in the right position of dominance over soul and body, and yet not driven beyond due measure by the exigencies of conflict or environment. There are three conditions of the spirit which the believer should be able to discern and deal with, i.e.:

(a) The spirit depressed, crushed or " down ".

(b) The spirit in its right position, in poise and calm control.

(c) The spirit drawn out beyond " poise " when it is in strain, or driven.

When the man walks after the spirit, and discerns any one of these conditions, he knows how to " lift " his spirit when it is depressed and how to check the over action by a quiet act of his volition, when it is drawn out of poise by over-eagerness, or the drive of spiritual foes.

The human spirit may be likened to the electric light. If it is in contact with the Spirit of God it is full of light; apart from Him it is darkness. Indwelt by Him " the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord " (Proverbs 20:27). The spirit may also be likened to elastic; when it is bound, or pressed, or weighted, it ceases to act, or to be the source of power and " spring ", so to speak. If a man feels weighted, he should find out what the weight is. If he is asked, " Is it your body ? " he would probably say " No ", but that he " feels bound inside ". Then what is it that is "bound" or "weighted?" Is it not the spirit? The spirit can be compressed or expanded, bound or free. The possibilities and potentialities of the human spirit are only known when the

spirit is joined to Christ, and " by reason of use " is made strong by the Holy Spirit to " stand against the powers of darkness ".

The spiritual man is "full-grown " in Christ

The " spiritual " man is also described by the Apostle as " full-grown " in Christ, and in the first letter to the Corinthians we have a striking contrast drawn between the spiritual and carnal believer. The carnal-or fleshly -believer, can only be fed with " milk ", the simplest element of the Gospel, whereas to the " full-grown " or " spiritual " man, can be given the " deep things of God ", things which cannot even be spoken " in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth, interpreting spiritual things (not truths, be it noted, but things-facts-substances-as real as things material on earth) to spiritual men " (I Corinthians 2:10,13, R. V. margin).

The Apostle makes it clear also that the "soulish "or " man of soul "-cannot receive these " things " of the Spirit, any more than the fleshly " babes of Christ " (I Corinthians 2:14), for to the soulish intellect and wisdom, they appear nought but foolishness. None but those who are " spiritual " can discern them, and examine (R.V. margin) them-for they can be " examined " as really as material things ! The " spiritual " man " examines all things ", for he is able by the Holy Spirit to penetrate to the inner spiritual source of all things, and pierce through the veil of sense and sight to the spiritual verities lying at the back of all things, but the "soulish " man, i.e., the man who can use only his natural intellect, cannot pierce further than the intellect can go, he can examine all things in the " natural " sphere, and no more !.

The " ` spiritual man ' is ripe in understanding ", writes the Apostle, and if we carefully examine all the references in Paul's Epistles to the " spiritual " man, and the " full grown " man, we shall see how the dividing of soul and spirit in the believer is the condition of reaching the stage called " spiritual ", or " of full-growth ". The " full grown " stage is again and again connected with the knowledge, teaching, and discernment of spiritual things, all having to do with the soul.

"We speak wisdom among the ` full-grown ' " (I Corinthians 2:6, R. V. margin) ; " Be not children in mind... but in mind be of full age " (I Corinthians 14:20, R. V. margin) ; " Teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect " (same Greek word as rendered full-grown, Colossians 1:28) ; " solid food is for full grown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern . . . " (Hebrews 5:14, R.V.). " Let us therefore, as many as be perfect "-or " ripe in understanding ", " perfect " being the antithesis of " babe " (same Greek word as " full-grown " in I Corinthians 2:6)-" be thus minded " (Philippians 3:15), writes the Apostle in his letters. For the Colossians he prays that they may be " filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding " (Colossians 1:9); and it is the " spiritual " man who is bidden to restore a brother overtaken in any trespass, for he only can exercise the heavenly wisdom required for faithfulness in dealing with sin from the standpoint of God, whilst loving tenderly the erring brother.*

Again, to the Ephesians the Apostle writes, " Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ " (Ephesians 4:13, R.V.). Here again is knowledge linked with full-growth, and the fulness of Christ ! The " unity of the faith " which should characterise the mystical Body of Christ, and bring about its " full-stature ", cannot be manifested until each of the individual members reaches the full-grown stage, and becomes a " spiritual " man; and again, each member cannot thus become " spiritual " until he apprehends the separation of soul and spirit, so that the spirit may be fully joined to the Risen Lord, and the "

soul-vessel " in its intellectual and other departments, be energized and dominated by the spirit from the sphere of the God-consciousness; and not from the lower life of the first Adam.

The spiritual man is " made perfect in love "

The word " perfect " or " complete " which is " full-grown " in I Corinthians 2:6, R.V. margin, and joined so often with the mind or knowledge, by Paul, is joined with love by the Apostle John. He speaks of the believer being " made perfect in love " (I John 4:18) and tells how " perfect love casteth out fear ", and " love made perfect " gives " boldness in the day of judgment ". The Epistle of John shows the " spiritual " man, therefore, as one with the affections of the soul fully possessed with the love of God, and so entirely as to be completely filled full with love flowing from Him Who dwells in the spirit. " God dwelleth in us and His love is ' perfected ' in us," writes the Apostle, i.e., the vessel of the soul is perfectly filled with Divine love, so that up to its measure and capacity it is " complete " with the love of God, and so filled that " fear " has no place, and no room.

But John's language means even more than the fact that the Divine Love of Him Who dwells in the spirit of the believer, can flow freely through the soul-vessel. He is really describing the life in the Spirit of the spiritual man, i.e., what living and dwelling in the sphere of the " God-consciousness " means. " God is love," he writes, " and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him " (I John 4:16). The " spiritual " man who lives and walks in the spirit of love is thus " abiding in God ". If " fear " or " hate " comes in, he has descended to the soul-realm, and admitted some element of the natural soul-life, or else, through the attack of evil spirits, he has ceased to co-work with God in his spirit. Upon discerning it he must at once go to the Cross, to submit the soulish element to its severing power; whilst Godward he calls it "sin", and seeks the application of the cleansing blood according to I John 1:7, at the same time resisting the powers of darkness, and taking up once more the " whole armour of God " for victory.

The spiritual man is " perfected into one " with all believers

The " spiritual man " is perfected into one spirit with others in Christ. The word " perfect " used in I Corinthians 2:6, was also used by the Lord Jesus in His High Priestly prayer, to describe the union between His redeemed ones, which lay as the burden on His heart on the eve of His going to the Cross to make that union possible. " As Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in us ... that they may be one, even as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one . . . " (John 7:21-23, R.V.). The essential union which exists between Father and Son the Union of essence in spirit with spirit-is the union of the believer each with the other who is IN God. The language of the Lord is unmistakable. He said, " That they may be one, even as WE are ONE! " This means Father and Son, dwelling in the spirit of the believer, by the Holy Ghost, in perfect-or complete-union; and of necessity it means also the same union of spirit with other believers. The " spiritual " man is therefore not only one with Christ in God, Who is Love, but he finds the same union with the same God abiding in others. Therefore, he cannot be fully abiding in God if he in any degree admits the soulish life of nature which is manifested in (1) divisions, (2) partiality (James 3:17, R. V. margin), or (3) partisanship (Galatians 5:20, R.V. margin).

The spiritual man " walks in light "

Again, it is of the " spiritual " man that the Apostle John writes, " If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin . . . " (I John 1: 7). The walking in light can only be by the man living in the sphere of the God-consciousness,

where God dwells in his spirit. Any descent into the realm of the soul may be likened to the " spirit" joined to Him Who is light-sinking into an opaque vessel, which brings a cloud or film over it, and obscures the light. The believer abiding in God Who is light, abides and walks in light, and in that light finds " fellowship " with God and with others who dwell in light, whilst the blood of Jesus goes on cleansing continuously from all unknown sin, which may unconsciously touch the abiding one by any intrusion of the " soul-life ", or from contact with sin in the world around.

" God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." " He that loveth ... abideth in the light." This is the Ascensionlife, or life hidden with Christ in God, of which the Apostle Paul writes. It was spoken of to the disciples by the Lord Jesus in His farewell words in the upper room at Jerusalem, and brought into their real experience by the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost, when the Spirit of the glorified Jesus entered their spirit, and they were lifted up out of the soul-realm into spiritual oneness with the glorified Lord. Abiding in Him, and He in them, the " world " believed. They saw the oneness of the Spirit filled company " made perfect in Love ", with all " fear " cast out; they saw them walking in such light that sinful selfishness, such as that manifested by Ananias, could not be allowed to exist among them.

In the light of all this, and what it means to Christ and His Church, that all the members of His Body should thus become " spiritual ", and adjusted-or perfected-into their place in union with the Risen Head, the importance of the believer understanding the difference between " soul " and " spirit " cannot be over-estimated. For upon his ceasing to live " after the flesh "-in the senseconsciousness-depends his growth into a fully " spiritual " man, i.e., a man able to understand his spirit, and to discern and examine spiritual things. A man sanctified wholly, by the complete liberation of his spirit from the domination of either soul or body, indwelt by the Triune God; and, walking whereunto he has attained, is yet pressing on to fuller " perfection " or completeness (Philippians 3:15,16).

How long should be the stage between the first step of the new birth and full-grown in the life of Christ, in the sense of the spirit being liberated, and-in union with the Risen Ascended Lord-having complete domination of soul and body, we cannot clearly say. The language used by the Apostle to the Corinthians, and again by the writer to the Hebrews, suggests blame that many had continued too long in the stage of babyhood, " yet carnal ", and needing milk on account of their weak spiritual life, when they should have been teachers, leading other " babes " on into full growth. The babe-stage can evidently be protracted or shortened, and need not be measured by ordinary periods of time. Probably either is determined by the measure of truth apprehended, and the knowledge and self-surrender of the believer. At all events, the language of the writer to the Hebrews makes it clear that the attitude of the believer has much to do with his progress. Writing to those he had just rebuked by saying that they had become " dull of hearing ", and needed to be taught again the first principles of the Gospel, he says: " Let us leave the word of the beginning of Christ, and press on unto full growth . . . " (Hebrews 6:1 R. V. margin) almost the very words of Paul to the Philippians in chapter 3, where he tells of his own eager pressing on, not considering that he was " already made perfect ", although he could say " Let us who are ... perfect ",i.e., complete, or full-grown-be thus minded in pressing on towards the goal of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus.

The spiritual man and the " spiritual body "

The " spiritual " body, referred to in I Corinthians 25:44, with which the believer will be clothed in the resurrection, is a logical outcome of the spiritual stage we have been considering. " That is not first which is spiritual," writes the Apostle, " but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual " (v. 46). The babe in Christ is " yet carnal ", but by his apprehension of Romans vi. he ceases to walk after the flesh, and walks

after the Spirit. Then he apprehends the "dividing of soul and spirit", and becomes a "spiritual man", with mind renewed, and his soul and body a vehicle for God to express Himself through him. Now the original order of the tripartite man is restored, in the sense of:

1. The Holy Spirit ruling in the liberated spirit (the seat of the God-consciousness), with
2. The Soul-or personality-as the vessel (the seat of the self-consciousness), and
3. The Body as the slave (the seat of sense-consciousness).

Now the man is truly "spiritual", or, to put it more crudely, we might say he is a "spirit" dwelling in the vessel of the "soul", and this again encased in a physical mortal body. The language of Paul clearly shows that the full redemption of the body awaits the appearing of the Lord from heaven. "We ourselves groan," he writes, "waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23); "We wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory" (Philippians 3:20,21); "We would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life" (2 Corinthians 5:4). The body is, therefore, still a "natural" body; a mortal body; a vessel of clay (2 Corinthians 4:7) and not until sown in the earth at death-or changed in the twinkling of an eye at the Lord's coming-is it raised "a spiritual body".

But the "spiritual" man who lives under the rule of the Holy Spirit day by day, may have an increasing "earnest" of the coming redemption of the body, for as he walks in the spirit, his body shares in the life-giving power of the Spirit, according to Romans 8:11, where the Apostle declares, "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies because of His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (R.V. margin). The power of the reality of this "quickenings of the mortal body", by the very same Spirit of the Father, which "raised up Jesus from the dead", can be known only as far as the soul-life of nature is continuously "lost" by the power of the Cross (Matthew 16: 24-26), for the mortal body can only be quickened by the Holy Spirit when the Life-giving Spirit is free to energise soul and body.

The Apostle's suggestive words in 2 Corinthians 4:10-12, have to do with this stage of the believer's life. Just as the soul-life has to be "lost" to find the Spirit-life inflowing from the Holy Spirit, using the soul-capacity and faculties; so the same principle of "loss" for "gain" must work in the mortal body. Therefore, it is written: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body".

The loss of the carnal-life animating the soul was gradual, giving place to the inflow of the Spirit-life as the believer yielded to the dividing of soul and spirit, brought about by the wielding of the sword of the Spirit by the Heavenly High Priest; and so is the "dying of Jesus" in the mortal body wrought continuously, as the believer follows on in the way of the Cross, "pressed, perplexed, pursued, smitten down"-yea, "pressed above measure, despairing even of life" (2 Corinthians 1: 8, 9), so as to cast him upon the God Who raiseth the dead, that he may prove the "life of Jesus" manifested in the sustaining and quickening of the mortal body. This "losing" of life, to "gain" the life of Jesus, is brought about by the Holy Spirit as the believer follows on to know the Lord. "We who live," writes the Apostle, "are always delivered to death ... that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us but life in you...."

Painful as it is to the " mortal flesh ", the " spiritual " man, able to " examine " these deep things of God, can see that the inworking of death and life means two results of vital importance to the Lord and His people : (1) That when the life of Jesus can freely flow from the sanctuary of the spirit through the soul faculties, quickening the " mortal body " with unhindered power, it means life to others, as well as to the believer himself-a quickening life to the whole Church of Christ, as depicted by the Lord in His promise of rivers of living water. (2) That this quickening of the mortal body is the " earnest of the Spirit ", whereby the body itself is being prepared for the hour when " what is mortal may be swallowed up of life ", even as the Apostle writes, " . . . He that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave unto us the earnest of the Spirit " (2 Corinthians 5:4,5).

Some dangers of the spiritual man

The believer who has become really " spiritual ", that is, with his spirit ruling soul and body-does not at that time pass out of the realm of conflict, but enters upon a more subtle phase of it, as set forth in Ephesians 6:10,8. The man who is said, in Ephesians 2:6, to be " seated with Christ in the heavenlies ", is afterwards described as " wrestling " with spiritual hosts of wickedness in " high places ", particularly in the form of " wiles " of the devil.

This indicates that the spiritual believer in conflict has mainly to watch against subtle spiritual wiles of spirit foes, who are seeking to entangle him in matters connected with the spiritual realm, rather than in the conflict between flesh and spirit described in Galatians 5:17.

In this phase of conflict, the wiles of the powers of darkness are mainly directed toward getting the spiritual man to walk, in some degree, after the soul and not after the spirit; that is, to be influenced by and to walk by anything in the realm of the senses, instead of in the spirit in co-operation with the Holy Spirit of God.

It is essential, then, that the believer, who is spiritual, should understand that deceiving spirits of Satan can create a counterfeit of the human spirit in the realm of the soul. They do this, by getting access to the outer man by guile, and then producing motions in the man other than those of the spirit. When these other motions-which possibly appear spiritual-get a hold, they may become strong enough to silence or overpower the true spirit action. If the believer is ignorant of the tactics of the enemy in this way, the true spirit action is easily allowed to sink into disuse, by the man following the counterfeit spiritual feelings, thinking he is " walking after the spirit ".

When the true spirit-action ceases, the evil spirits may suggest that " God now guides through the renewed mind ", which is an attempt to hide their counterfeit workings, and the man's disuse of his spirit. At the same time comes counterfeit light to the mind, followed by counterfeit reasoning, judging, etc., and the man thinks he has light from God, because he is unaware that he has ceased to " walk after the spirit ", and is now walking after the natural mind.

Another danger of the spiritual man lies in the subtle attempts of the deceiving spirits of Satan to get him to walk after the flesh (i.e., body), under the belief that he is still walking in the spirit, by creating feelings in the body which the man thinks are " spiritual ". To defeat these wiles, the believer should understand that all physical consciousness of supernatural things, and even undue physical consciousness of natural things, should be refused, as both divert the mind from " walking after the spirit ", and set it upon the bodily sensations. Undue physical consciousness is also an obstacle to the continuous concentration of the mind, and in a spiritual believer an " attack " of " physical consciousness " made use of by the enemy may break concentration of the mind, and bring a cloud upon the spirit: therefore the body should be kept calm,

and under full control. For this reason, excessive laughter, and all "rushing" which rouses the physical life to the extent of dominating mind and spirit should be avoided. Believers who desire to be "spiritual", and of "full age" in the life of God, must avoid excess, extravagance, and extremes in all things. (See 1 Corinthians 9:25-27.)

Because of the domination of the physical part of the man, and the misunderstanding of supernatural experiences felt in the body, the body is made to do the work of the spirit, and is forced into prominence which suppresses the true spirit life. Under such conditions the body feels the pressure and feels the conflict, and becomes the "sense" in the place of the mind and spirit. Believers should learn to discriminate, and know how to discern the true feelings of the spirit, which are neither emotional (soulish) nor physical. (See, for example, Mark 8:12; John 13:21; Acts 18:5 A. V.) Through ignorance, a large majority of believers walk "after the soul", i.e., their mind and emotions, under the impression that they are "walking after the spirit". Because of what this means—depriving the believer of vital spirit power—the satanic forces use all their wiles to draw him to live in his soul or body, sometimes flashing visions to the mind, making presentations to the mind during prayer, or giving exquisite sensations of joy, buoyancy of life, etc., to the body.

To depend upon supernatural things given from outside, or experiences in the sense realm, checks the inward spiritual life. By the bait of "experiences" in the senses, the believer is drawn out to live in the outer field of his body, instead of living in the true sphere of the spirit; then, ceasing to act from his centre, he is caught by the outer workings of the supernatural in his circumference, and loses—quite unconsciously—his inner cooperation with God. Then his spirit, which is the organ of the Holy Spirit in conflict against a spiritual foe, drops into abeyance and is ignored, because the believer is occupied with the sense-experience. Consequently, it is practically out of action, either for guidance, power in service, or conflict.

There is a serious danger arising out of the human spirit acting apart from co-operation with the Holy Spirit. When the spirit has been "divided" from the soul and become dominant, it is then open to become influenced by deceiving spirits in quite another way. Supposing in one of the ways already indicated, or otherwise, the man has ceased (unconsciously) to co-operate with the Holy Spirit, and is still guided by his spirit, he is liable to think his own masterful spirit is an evidence of the power of God, because in other directions he sees the Holy Spirit using him in winning souls. Under that delusion he may have a flood of indignation inserted into his spirit, and he pours it out, thinking it is all of God, but others, with real discernment, are conscious of a harsh note which is clearly not of God. Such an experience may easily take place in conflict, as well as in speaking, if the praying one is not watchful, the energising power being demoniacal, either directly influencing the spirit or by way of the soulish emotions.

This influence on the human spirit by evil spirits counterfeiting the Divine workings in the man himself, because he is out of co-working with the Holy Spirit, needs to be understood and detected by the believer who seeks to walk with God. He needs to know that because he is spiritual, his "spirit" is open to two forces of the spirit realm. If he thinks that only the Holy Spirit can influence him in the spiritual sphere, he is sure to be misled. If it were so, he would become infallible, but he needs to watch and pray, and seek to have the eyes of his understanding enlightened to distinguish the true workings of God from the counterfeit.

The believer who is "spiritual" must ponder deeply the unveiling of the heavenly warfare given in Ephesians 6 and strive to know in its fullest extent the experimental meaning of the "whole armour of God"

" which he is to " take " and use in the " evil day " of specific onslaughts of the foe.

The burden of the Spirit of God at this present time is the perfecting, or full ripening into maturity, of the members of the Body of Christ, so that His appearing may quickly take place, and the millennial reign of Christ, and His co-heirs be ushered in, for the peace of the world and the discomfiture of Satan; who will then be cast down into the pit, and the kingdoms of the world become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ." Even so, Lord Jesus-come quickly. Amen."

Made free ! Made free in Jesus

Deep planted in His death, He liberates His Life power,

And breathes His Spirit's breath, Then, waxing strong in spirit,

With force of quickening life, The soul and body governed,

Its members cease from strife.

Made free ! Made free in Jesus:

Joined to the Risen One,

By conflict prayer you triumph,

And claim His victory won. Freed with His glorious freedom,

Above the darkness rife;

For now the law of sin and death

Is conquered by His life.

M.M.

* For fuller light on this aspect of the walk after the spirit, see War on the Saints, from which this portion is extracted

* Colossians 1:28,29. See Conybeare's Note.36

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jessie-penn-lewis/the-spiritual-christian/>

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