

Cmml Missionary Conference 1995-09 Marks of Spirituality

by William MacDonald

A spiritual person is one who is guided and controlled by the Holy Spirit, and who produces the fruit of the Spirit, and is characterized by a passionate desire to obey the Lord, Christ-centeredness, and faithfulness to the Lord in trials and heartaches.

Duration: 39:10

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 3:2

Topics: "Conference"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being a spiritual person who looks at life through the eyes of faith. The spiritual man or woman has a passion for souls and understands the realities of heaven and hell. The speaker encourages the audience to realize their need for improvement and to be motivated to make changes. The sermon also highlights the joy and anticipation that comes from eagerly awaiting the coming of the Lord.

Transcript

We're not going to turn to Daniel tonight. What I'd like to do is bring some threads together tonight and speak to you about some march of a spiritual person. We've had some illustrations of this from the book of Daniel, and we could turn to 1 Corinthians 3. We're not going to give an exposition of it, but the idea of a spiritual person is mentioned here.

1 Corinthians 3, verse 1. And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people, but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food, for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able, for you are still carnal. But whereas there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal, behaving like mere men? He goes down through the chapter and elaborates on this subject, especially the fact that they were setting up one speaker against another as their favorite.

And I like the way he says down at the end of the chapter, you don't have to do that. You don't have to choose one man and say, he's my favorite. He says in verse 21, Therefore let no one glory in men, for all things are yours.

They're all yours. Anyone who is out there proclaiming the Lord Jesus Christ and telling the richness that are in him, they all belong to you, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death, things present or things to come, all are yours. You are Christ, and Christ is God.

So, marks of a spiritual person. And I will not be speaking to you tonight on what I am, but on what I aspire to be. I'd like to make that disclaimer at the very outset of the meeting.

And if I use the word he a lot, or man, I use them in a generic sense to mean he or she. That's why I didn't say marks of a spiritual man, but marks of a spiritual person. Actually, in the history of the Christian church, I believe that women have probably been more spiritual than men.

Don't you think? I do. I believe that. So I probably should be saying she instead of he.

But you'll understand what I mean. Actually, the word spiritual is used in a very wide sense today. For instance, New Age people talk about spirituality.

People in the occult talk about spirituality. The spiritual. But we want to look at it from a New Testament sense.

What is a spiritual person? Think back in your lifetime. Who are spiritual men and women that you have known? I said to one of my colleagues the other day, I wish our young people in California could know some of the spiritual men and women, spiritual giants that I have known in years gone by. He said, they don't, there aren't.

That's all he said. He said, they don't, there aren't. What is a truly spiritual person? A truly spiritual person is one who is guided and controlled by the Holy Spirit, and who produces the fruit of the Spirit.

And of course, there are degrees of spirituality, and no one has attained. Growth is always possible. What are some of the marks of a spiritual person? Well, of course, I'll say what's obvious.

He has to be born again. He has to have experienced that miraculous, supernatural, marvelous work of the Spirit of God, where he's convicted of his sin, and by a definite act of faith, he receives the Lord Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. He's abandoned any hope of saving himself, either by good works or good character, but he believes that the Lord Jesus died for him on the cross of Calvary, and he turns his life over to him.

That's obvious. I'm emphasizing the obvious tonight. But let's go on from there.

A spiritual person is a person who gives a high priority to the word of God and to prayer. Absolutely basic. A high priority to the word of God and prayer.

And I will be using some illustrations tonight, and they'll be mostly people who are safely home with the Lord. Many of you know of Robert Murray McChain, a young servant of the Lord in Scotland years ago. He died at the age of 29 and left his mark upon the entire country.

And someone said of him, He is the most Jesus-like man I have ever met. I think that's a wonderful thing to be said about anybody. He is the most Jesus-like man I have ever met.

He spent hours in holy communion with the Lord inside the veil. He was there in rapturous praise and adoration, bathed in the love of Calvary. And he would come forth from God's presence there to leave the

fragrance of Christ as he went from house to house in visitation.

That's a spiritual man. And many of you here tonight have known people like that. They didn't know that their faith was shining, but they had been beholding the glory of the Lord as in a glass, and they were changed to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.

A great thing to aspire to, isn't it? Hours spent in the word of God, in meditation and study of the word of God, in memorizing the word of God, and in prayer. Certainly one of the basic ingredients of a spirit-filled person. Secondly, he has a passionate desire to obey the Lord, a passionate desire to obey, to do the thing that is pleasing in the eyes of Christ.

On Sunday morning down at the chapel I was mentioning some verses having to do with the Lord Jesus, and maybe we could turn to them just now, because they've just been in my mind constantly lately. John 5, verse 19. The Lord Jesus is speaking, and he says, Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do.

For whatever he, the Father, does, the Son also does in like manner. What a wonderful statement. It doesn't mean that the Son of God was powerless, but it means that he was so morally perfect that in submission to God his Father, he only did the things that the Father told him to do.

I think we can deduce from that that the more our lives are spent in seeking the will of God and in doing his will and not our own, the more spiritual we attain. And also in verse 30, in that same chapter, I can of my own self do nothing. This doesn't prove that he was just a man, because no other man could say that.

No other mere man can say that. I can't say that I can of my own self do nothing. I can do a lot of things.

That's the whole trouble with me. I can act in self-will. I can act in disobedience to the Lord, and Jesus couldn't.

Our blessed Lord couldn't. He could only do as we read, As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is righteous, because I do not seek my own will, there it is, but the will of the Father who sent me. What a wonderful thing.

Every morning he woke up and his ear was opened to receive instructions from God the Father for that day. The mark of the spiritual man. And not only in those verses, but I, and incidentally I mentioned on Sunday morning too, these verses answer the question, could Jesus have sinned? He could only do what the Father told him to do.

Could the Father ever tell him to sin? If he could, he wasn't God. I don't know why we have to write books on the subject. It's as clear as crystal, a single verse like that dispels any thought that the Lord Jesus could ever sin.

And then John 12, verse 50. I tell you, when I read these things about the Lord Jesus and his moral glory, I just bow in worship. He says, I know that his command is everlasting life, therefore whatever I speak, just as the Father has told me, so I speak.

Isn't that wonderful? He only spoke and taught the things that the Father told him to speak. And I think for my own self, that solves the problem of the verse that we read this morning in Mark. Of that hour knoweth no man, not even the Son of Man.

Only the Father knows that hour. And people say, well, it just shows he was human like us and his knowledge was limited. I don't think so.

I think it means that the time of the Savior's coming was not something that God gave him to reveal to man in his teaching ministry. The servant knoweth not what the master doeth. Mark, of course, is the gospel of the servant, as dear brother Ron has so beautifully drawn out.

So, he has a passionate desire to obey the Lord, to do the thing that is pleasing in the sight of the Lord Jesus Christ. Next, he is Christ-centered rather than self-centered. The favorite ministry of the Holy Spirit is to occupy our hearts with the Lord Jesus.

And so, a spiritual person is Christ-centered. I think that's wonderful. I love to be in the company of someone, and he opens his mouth, she opens her mouth, and it's about the Lord.

There are a lot of people like that. They're always a rebuke to me, too. How different this is from what is being taught today, having a good self-image.

You go down to the average bookstore and you can buy dozens of books, and love yourself. You can't love God if you don't love yourself. Self, self, self.

The spiritual man knows better than that. The spiritual man knows that even a sanctified self is a poor substitute for a glorified Christ. And for every look he takes at himself, as McShane did, he takes ten looks at Christ.

That's good balance, I would say. So, that's a wonderful thing, to find a person who is really Christ-centered. And his motto is, from John the Baptist, he must increase, and I must decrease.

The spiritual man's song is, Not I but Christ be honored, loved, exalted. Not I but Christ be seen, be known, and heard. Not I but Christ in every look and action.

Not I but Christ in every thought and word. Oh, to be saved from myself, dear Lord. Oh, to be lost in thee.

Oh, that it may be no more I but Christ who lives in me. The spiritual man is never happier than when he's praising the Lord. Never happier than when he's praising the Lord.

This person is a worshiper. It's as if the Lord has opened a veil, has drawn back the curtain, and he's at the cross of Calvary, and he looks up and sees the incarnate Son of God hanging on that cross. And the proof dawns in him that that one who hangs there is the one who flung the heavens into place.

That he's looking up and seeing his God dying for him. No one less than his God. You say, Brother, there's a theological problem there.

God is immortal. God can't die. Oh, yes, he can.

The one who died there on the cross, in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. In Acts chapter 20, we read that God purchased the church with his own blood. And this great truth dawns on him, and he can never be the same.

He can never be the same, and he goes through the rest of his life praising and worshiping the Lord Jesus Christ, the one by whom all things consist, the firstborn from the dead. Next, the spiritual man remains

faithful to the Lord in all the trials and heartaches of life. Somebody told me last night about a dear young man, and his marriage was kind of on the rocks, and his wife left him, and he abandoned the Lord.

He said, He wasn't there when I needed him. A spiritual man never talks like that. He talks like Polycarp, that great martyr of the church, and he was threatened first with being thrown to the lions and then with being burned at the stake, unless he renounced Christ.

And Polycarp said, These 86 years have I served my Lord. He never did me any harm. He could have said he always did me good.

And I cannot deny my Lord and Master now. And he endured the fire, rejoicing that he was counted worthy to suffer for the namesake of the Lord Jesus. The spiritual man realizes that God is on the throne, and God is where he hasn't made his first mistake yet, and he never will.

He realizes that everything that comes into his life is filtered through the wisdom, love, and power of the Lord Jesus Christ. And he takes it on that basis. The spiritual man is never satisfied with his status.

He always yearns for more personal holiness and godliness. Never satisfied. It's so easy to become complacent and think, I have arrived.

Not the spiritual man. In fact, the more he grows in Christ-likeness, and the more he yearns for more, the more he realizes his own other condition before the Lord, and wants to be more like the Savior. And he prays, Lord, make me as holy as it is possible for a person to be on this side of heaven.

I think it was McCain who said that. Lord, make me as holy as it is possible for a person to be on this side of heaven. The spiritual man grieves over the sins which the world applauds.

I want to tell you, there's a lot of grieving among the people of God today, isn't there? Just talk to them. You'll find out. Where they see every divine institution under attack from the world.

Incredible. Anything that's of God, any principle or law or institution that's of God. Think of how the institution of marriage is being assaulted today.

Absolutely incredible. The family, the headship of man, the obedience of children to their parents. Imagine children getting divorced from their parents.

Legal divorce from their parents. How ridiculous can you be? The authority of human government. I always have a shiver when I pass a car and it has a bumper sticker that says question authority.

And I think I know what they mean. Incidentally, I think that's why people love the theory of evolution. They know if there's a God, they're responsible to him, and they don't want to be responsible to him.

And this is their mental gymnastic to avoid responsibility to that higher authority. The sacredness of human life, abortion and euthanasia and everything. The practice of justice.

Think of what's going on in California. Everything happens in California. The trial.

So even one of the lawyers involved in the trial wants to turn it back on the practice of law because of the circus that's going on there in a law court today. All of the things that God has instituted for the good of the human race under assault today. The spiritual man walks by faith and not by sight.

Him realities are the realities of faith. The things unseen. That's what faith does.

It makes the future present and it makes the unseen seen. It makes the unseen visible. You read about it in Hebrews 11.

I like to tell about, I told you I'm sure before some of you, I like to tell about the day I was standing with Fred Elliott out in Lombard, Illinois. We were on the porch of the Lombard Gospel Chapel and we were talking. Fred was always ministering Christ here.

And while we were talking the California, the train, the California Zephyr, just about a half a block away went zooming by two huge diesel engines and the roar was such that any conversation seemed to have stopped. You know, and when the, when quiet descended again, Fred put his hand on my shoulder and he said, power brother, but nothing like the power that raised him from the dead. I thought it was just a train.

He saw a picture of the power that raised the Lord Jesus from there. He was a spiritual man. So that's when you're with a spiritual person like that, you feel I don't even rise above flesh and blood when you realize the depth of their lives.

I counted dollars while God counted crosses. I counted gains while he counted losses. I counted by the, I counted worth by the things gained in store.

He sized me up by the scars that I wore. I coveted honors and sought for degrees. He wept as he counted the hours spent on my knees.

I never knew till one day by the grave how vain are the things we spend life to save. The man, a spiritual man or woman, they are looking at things through the eyes of faith. They look for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God, and is cast a different complexion on all of life.

The spiritual man has a passion for souls, the realities of heaven and of hell. The marvelous deliverance that he has experienced, he longs to share it with others. And he says in the language of the poet, only like souls I see the folks there under, bound who should conquer, slaves who should be kings, hearing their one hope with an empty wonder, sadly contented with a show of things.

Then with a rush the intolerable craving shivers throughout me like a trumpet call, oh to save these, to perish for their saving, die for their life, be offered for them all. That's the language of the spiritual man. I often think of dear Corrie Ten Boom and her sister Betsy suffering in concentration camp.

And Betsy would say to Corrie, Corrie, when we get out of here we've got to help these people. And Corrie said to herself, yes, yes, of course we've got to help these people, thinking of the other prisoners like themselves. But that isn't what Betsy was referring to.

Betsy was referring to the guards, to those who were beating them and treating them cruelly. She wanted to win them to the shepherd of love. And Corrie wrote, and I wondered, not for the first time, what sort of a person she was, this sister of mine.

What kind of road she followed while I trudged beside her on the all-too-solid earth. And I want to tell you, Corrie herself was a spiritual woman too. Not just Betsy, but Corrie herself.

But what an insight to the lives of those two dear sisters and how much they have taught us. Next, the spiritual person is willing to part with the dearest thing in life for Christ's sake. One of the verses in the Bible that I can understand is the words of the Apostle Paul writing to the Romans.

He could wish himself a curse from Christ for his brethren, his kinsmen, according to the flesh. If somebody can explain that to me afterwards, please do so. How can a true believer be so consumed with the love for his fellow countrymen that he could wish himself a curse from Christ? What does that mean? Hell? When I read that I think, well, I'm not a spiritual person.

I've never had that emotion in my heart. Second, the spiritual person doesn't offend others and is not easily offended himself. Some people just have a knack for going around offending other people.

One lady says to another, yes, it is a beautiful dress. It's too bad they didn't have your size. Things like that.

A spiritual person doesn't talk like that. Yet a spiritual person can really take a beating, a licking, and keep on kicking. The spiritual person is quick to confess sin to the Lord, quick to rush into the presence of God when he has sinned and to confess it.

He does not let sin accumulate. He wants to keep a clean record before the Lord, and he claims the promise of God by faith. We confess our sin, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sin, to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The spiritual man is quick to repent and apologize for wrongs that he has done. He has learned to say those very difficult words, I was wrong, I am sorry, please forgive me. The spiritual person mourns over anything that brings shame and reproach on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It makes me think of the Lord himself when he was in the temple and he drove out the money changers with a small scourge of cord. And the disciples remembered that it was said of him, the zeal of thine house has eaten me up. He was consumed with a passion for the glory of his father, and this was dishonoring to his father, and he took appropriate action.

And the spiritual man reads in the newspaper the terrible scandal involving the Christian testimony and drives him to his knees in mourning and grief that such shame should be splashed over the pages of the newspaper involving his blessed Lord. The spiritual person is faithful to the meetings of the local assembly, and he does not allow other activities to interfere with his attendance and participation. When the doors are open, you can expect him to be there.

Many of you know the name Michael Faraday, one of the great scientists of his day. He was in a lecture once, and he held the audience spellbound as he discussed the properties of magnetism. At the conclusion, the whole place was rocked with applause, and one of the country's chief men rose to propose a motion of congratulation, and it was carried with renewed thunders of applause, and the audience waited for Faraday's reply.

But he wasn't there. He had slipped off quietly to his local fellowship, his home fellowship, a church that never boasted more than 20 members. Here he could have had this great acclamation as one of the great scientists of his day, but he'd rather be there meeting with his fellow Christians, a church that never boasted more than 20 members.

The spiritual man holds a very light grip on material things. He loves people more than he loves things. He loves God more than he loves money.

Sometimes I think we don't get the force of the Savior's words. He taught very clearly that you either love God and hate mammon, or you love mammon and hate God, and there's nothing in between. It's shocking, isn't it? What kind of stern discipleship is that? Well, that's what he said.

You either love God and hate mammon, or you love mammon and hate God. That's quite a choice to make. The spiritual man is like David Livingstone.

He said, I am determined to possess nothing except in relation to the kingdom of Christ. If something helps him in his service for the Lord Jesus, if something helps him in the gospel outreach, he'll have it. Otherwise he doesn't want it.

The spiritual man consistently practices separation from the world. We mentioned that the other night, didn't we? We saw it in the life of Daniel and his three friends. They knew what it was to practice separation from the world.

This man, conscious of his heavenly calling and destiny, studiously avoids becoming entangled in the affairs of this life. He doesn't seek a place in a world that gave his Savior nothing but a cross and a grave. Not too many years ago, our hymnbooks were filled with hymns like this.

They're not in there anymore. O worldly pomp and glory, your charms are spread in vain. I've heard a sweeter story.

I've found a truer gain. Where Christ a place prepareth, there is my love to bode. There shall I gaze on Jesus.

There shall I dwell with God. Songs of pilgrims going through the world, taking nothing of its character upon themselves. The spiritual man looks at things from an otherworldly viewpoint.

He, by faith, sees himself seated with Christ in heavenly places, looking down upon the world. That's really very good. All of you who have traveled in a plane, you take off and cars look about the same, but the higher you go, the smaller the cars are, and pretty soon men are practically out of sight.

The higher you go, the less the world appears to be. The spiritual man has a detached view of things of earth. We sing that.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace. During the Second World War, a young Christian ran up to a man of God and said with jubilation, I understand our bombers were over the enemy last night.

That man said, I didn't know the church of God had bombers. Well, you could tell where he was living, couldn't you? I didn't know the church of God had bombers. What a rebuke to that dear young fellow who was rejoicing over the destruction of men, women and children.

As a spiritual man, his apologies never include the words if or we. What does that mean? Well, it means he never says if I have done anything wrong, I am willing to be forgiven. Any apology or confession that has the word if in it is phony.

It's comforting, but it's phony. He never prays, oh, father, if we have done anything wrong. One man was with a Christian worker one night, and he was confessing sin, and he said that, oh, father, if we have done anything wrong, and the counselor said, just a minute, don't drag me into your sin.

We. The spiritual man accepts the chastening of God without complaint. He doesn't despise it.

He doesn't become discouraged by it. He doesn't faint under it. He doesn't do it, endure it stoically or fatalistically, but he's exercised by it.

Some of the verses of scripture that flashed through his mind in the trials and temptations of life. Even so, father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. Or he might say it is the Lord.

Let him do unto me what seemeth good to him. He's comforted by the words of the Savior. What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shall know hereafter.

And he takes refuge in the truth. As for God, his way is perfect. I like Ecclesiastes 5.2. God is in heaven and you on earth.

That solves a lot of problems for me. God is in heaven and you on earth. God nothing does nor suffers to be done, but what thou wouldst thyself couldst thou but see the end of all he does as well as he.

If we could see the purpose toward which God is working, we would arrange things just the same way. The spiritual man joyfully awaits the coming of the Lord. I was thinking of that when Ron was ministering from Mark this morning.

He joyfully awaits the coming of the Lord. If you want to give me a lift in life, come and talk to me about the coming of the Lord. I always get a spiritual rise when that subject comes up.

And what gives me special joy is when young people come to me and you can tell it's a longing for the Lord to come. I can see why an old person like myself. But when young people come and they're really enthusiastically looking forward to the coming of the Lord, that does something special for me.

The spiritual man, if he had his choice, he'd be at home with the Lord in heaven, but he realizes there's a work for him to do down here. He longs to enter the palace and see the King in his beauty. And his heart beats just a little faster when he reads in the newspaper and thinks, ah, the coming of the Lord.

Things are happening in the press. When somebody hands him a card connected with the Cashless Society, Visa has just spent two billion dollars inventing a system for the Cashless Society. And if you were close enough, you could see that this is where the computer chip goes in.

And that'll have your name and your social security number. And for some people, it will have the number 666, perhaps. Thank God I won't be here.

This is just a pilot one, just a prototype of it. Only 3,000 of these were made. But I look at that and my heart beats just a little faster.

Why? Because the technology for the Antichrist and for the tribulations, it's already in place. It's here. And I think the coming of the Lord draws near.

Maranatha. How very wonderful. Finally, the spiritual man is not afraid to die.

He's not afraid to die. I think I mentioned the other night, didn't I, that one of the young fellows in our assembly, a California highway patrolman, said that right after he got saved, that's the first thing he noticed. He said, I'm no longer afraid to die.

I like Spurgeon, he wrote on Psalm 91. The person described in Psalm 91 fills out the measure of his days, and whether he dies young or old, he's quite satisfied with life and quite content to leave it. He shall rise from life's banquet as a man who has had enough and would not have more, even if he could.

He realizes that death is not the end, but not the finale, but the beginning of eternal life in its fullness. He knows that to die is gain, which is very far better. Some people think that the spiritual man is otherworldly.

That's absolutely true. Some people think he's so heavenly minded, he's not earthly. Well, that's not true at all.

He's God's man, living to do the thing that pleases the heart of Christ. And I want to tell you, there's nothing better than that. What is the conclusion of the matter? Well, no one of us has arrived.

We all need to be changed, don't we? And we should be more spiritual than we are. We all have great need for improvement, and only when we realize this will we be motivated to do something about it. Shall we pray? Father, when we stand in the presence of your glory, we have to say with Peter, depart from me, for I am a sinful man.

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