



The Holy Spirit

A DAWN PUBLICATION

"THE HOLY SPIRIT"

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*Dedicated to the King of kings and Lord of lords
in the interest of his consecrated followers
and of all who are seeking a better under-
standing of the manner in which God's
hand is now being manifested in
the affairs of men.*

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CHAPTER I

The Holy Spirit of God

"The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

—Genesis 1:2

NO SUBJECT is of greater importance than the Bible's testimony concerning the Spirit of God and its relationship to all his mighty acts. The Spirit of God is referred to hundreds of times in the Bible. In the New Testament it is usually called the "Holy Spirit"—often mistranslated "Holy Ghost" in the King James Version. In the Old Testament "spirit" is translated from the Hebrew word **ruwach**, which Prof. Strong defines as "wind." The same word is many times translated "breath." In the New Testament "spirit" translates the Greek word **pneuma**, meaning, according to Prof. Strong, "breath, or current of air."

Let us not conclude, however, that the Holy Spirit of God is merely wind, or a blast of air. The ancient Hebrew and Greek languages did not contain specific words for everything, and this was particularly true in expressing thoughts pertaining to God and his mighty works. However, through use, many words with specific meanings took on accommodated meanings. Thus **ruwach** in the Hebrew language and **pneuma** in the Greek language, because of their original application to the invisible power of the wind, came to mean any invisible force, or power, and were used to describe the invisible power of God.

Broadly speaking, then, the Spirit of God is the invisible power of God. It is the invisible, indefinable energy of the Creator by which he accomplishes all his good purposes. It is that mighty power which cannot be thwarted, and which enables the Creator to accomplish all the good pleasure of his will. Jehovah says, "I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it." (Isa. 46:11) The Creator also says, "My word . . . that goeth forth out of my mouth . . . shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."—Isa. 55:10, 11

The Spirit or power of God is manifest throughout all creation. It was the Spirit of God that transformed this planet from an empty, shapeless mass into the beautiful earth which it is, making it capable of sustaining countless varieties of things animate and inanimate. In this work of transformation it was God's Spirit which set the bounds of the mighty oceans so that the Creator could say, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."—Job 38:11

It was God's power that brought forth the grass and herbs in the earth. It was his Spirit that implemented his decree, "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life." Surely "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." (Gen. 1:2, 20) It was Jehovah's Spirit that fulfilled his word, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind." (Gen. 1:24) It was his power that operated in the creation of man.

It is the power of God, directed in secret processes known only to him, that enables all life on earth to reproduce its kind. Solomon wrote, "Thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all." (Eccles. 11:5) Solomon was the wisest of all men in his day, but he acknowledged

his ignorance of how the Spirit of God operates, and our scientists today can do no better than say "Amen" to Solomon's confession.

We cannot understand the workings of divine power. We can merely marvel at what it accomplishes. Like the wind, it is truly an invisible power. Gravitation is one of its manifestations—He "hangeth the earth upon nothing." (Job 26: 7) But the earth is only an infinitesimal speck in God's great universe. Think of the countless billions of suns and stars and planets, all of which are likewise hung upon "nothing," yet they spin around in the orbits designed for them, kept in place by what we call "the law of gravitation."

Think of the power of the great Creator which is contained in our sun, and is given off under a controlled process that furnishes our earth with light and heat! We are told that the sun gives off as much energy in one second as man has used with all his gadgets ever since he has been on the earth. And even the power or energy utilized by man has its origin with God. Man cannot produce power except through utilizing the created things of God.

Man has now discovered the tremendous energy that is locked up in a single atom. Try to figure out the number of atoms contained in all of God's vast creation! It is impossible for the human mind to fathom, but the mere contemplation of it may help us to grasp a little more realistically the almighty power of God. For a Creator possessing such unlimited sources of power, the preparation of the earth for human habitation was a simple matter.

The Power of Life

The Spirit, or power, of God, can also be a life-giving power. In Genesis 6:17 **ruwach** is translated "breath" in the expression, "breath of life." We could say, then, that the **ruwach**, or Spirit of God which moved upon the face of

the waters, is also the Spirit of life. Confirming this, we read in Job 12:10 concerning the Creator, "In whose hand is the soul [margin, 'life'] of every living thing, and the breath [ruwach] of all mankind." It is this thought that Paul expressed in his sermon on Mars' Hill when he said of God, "In him we live, and move, and have our being." —Acts 17:28

God's Spirit is the power that created inanimate as well as animate life. "Only God can make a tree," a poet wrote, and this highlights the fact that but for the Spirit of God there would be no trees, no flowers, no grass, no fruit, no vegetables. Scientists can put together all the elements in a blade of grass, but they cannot make it live. In his sermon to the Athenians Paul said that God is not "far from every one of us." (Acts 17:27) Certainly the Spirit of God is manifest all around us—in the beauty and fragrance of the flowers; in his loving provision of food; and in the gorgeous landscapes which enrapture us with their beauty, formed by the blending of myriads of forms of inanimate life.

When Paul sought an illustration of Christian activity in proclaiming the Gospel he likened it to the sowing and watering of seed, but explained that it is God who gives the "increase." (I Cor. 3:7) How futile would be the work of a farmer in sowing seed in the springtime if God did not give the increase! Some farmers may realize when they see the tiny plants push up the earth and spread forth their leaves that the Spirit of God is working to give the increase, but many do not. How much more every manifestation of life with which we are surrounded would mean if we could just keep in mind that what we see is not merely a chemical process, not a fortuity of "blind nature," but the working of the Spirit of God.

God's Spirit in Man

Marvelous though the various manifestations of God's

Spirit are as seen all around us every day of our lives, the Bible reveals that there is a more personal exercise of this power in the lives of his human creatures, especially those who serve him. This comes to light in God's dealings with Joseph in the land of Egypt. Pharaoh told Joseph his dreams—the dreams which were prophetic of seven years of plenty in the land, to be followed by seven years of famine. "And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath showed Pharaoh what he is about to do." (Gen. 41:25) God "showed" Pharaoh through his dreams, interpreted by Joseph. Later Pharaoh said concerning Joseph, "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?"—vs. 38

Yes, the "Spirit" of God was in Joseph. In this instance God used his power, first to impress the two dreams upon the mind of Pharaoh, and then to reveal to Joseph the prophetic meaning of the dreams. But how could that be done, some may ask? The simple answer is that we do not know. Neither do we know how God makes a tree. Surely the mighty power that hangs the earth and every other heavenly body in the universe upon nothing, that gives life to every living thing, would have no difficulty impressing certain thoughts upon the mind of one of his creatures, and giving another the ability to interpret those thoughts.

It was the Creator who designed the human brain, with all its marvelous nerve and blood connections by which it normally functions. It would be a simple matter for him to cause thoughts to enter the brain other than through the normal media of the five senses. All life is a miracle so far as our ability to understand its functions is concerned. Once we recognize this, and then accept the fact of the mighty power of God as manifested in all his creative works, the miracles recorded in the Bible will not be stumbling stones to our faith. We will see them to be but commonplace activities in the outworking of the Creator's wise designs toward his human creatures.

"All Manner of Workmanship"

Another, and different, manifestation of God's Spirit was given to Bezaleel at the time of the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness. The need for this is apparent. The Israelites had been held slaves in Egypt for generations, and it is quite unlikely that they were permitted much opportunity to learn the skills of that day, in the use of metals, etc. When it came time to build the tabernacle and provide its furnishings a need arose along this line, and God took care of the situation.

The Lord said to Moses concerning Bezaleel, "I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship. And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee."—Exod. 31:3-6

When Moses received the instructions from the Lord concerning the building of the tabernacle and the making of all its fine and intricate furnishings he probably wondered just how it could be done. He may have questioned that any of the Israelites were capable of such an understanding. But it was no problem to God. He whose Spirit had created the universe and has deposited all the basic metals in the earth; would have no problem in revealing to those whom he chose the needed wisdom to fashion those metals, to carve the wood of the trees, and "to work in all manner of workmanship." He could have commissioned the angels to do this skilled work had he chosen to do so, but in his wisdom he saw best to give some of **his** human servants the ability to do the work. And in this we

have still another manner in which God exercises his power, his Spirit.

In connection with the building of the tabernacle our attention is called to still another way in which God's Spirit made the undertaking possible. It was marvelous that God gave certain ones the needed ability, but this would have been useless unless they had materials with which to work. At the time the Israelites were in the "wilderness." They could not embark on mining expeditions to secure the needed metals, but even this did not pose a problem to the Lord. By his providences the Israelites had obtained jewelry of various sorts which they took with them when they left Egypt.—Exod. 12:35, 36

When the time came to build the tabernacle, Moses "spake unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the Lord commanded, saying, Take ye from you an offering unto the Lord: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord; gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair." (Exod. 35:4-6) Moses continued the list of all the things which would be needed for the tabernacle and its furnishings. Then, in verse 21 we read, "And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his [the Lord's] Spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments." (Exod. 35:21) Here we see the power of the Lord operating in the hearts of his people, stirring them up to donate the needed materials for the tabernacle which he had instructed Moses to build. But, again, we cannot comprehend how it was done.

Still another and different manifestation of God's power is mentioned in connection with his dealing with Israel during the period of the judges, in which the nation had no central government. This lack of organization made them

easy prey to their enemies. When they became oppressed, and destruction threatened, the Lord intervened. He did this by raising up a leader, or a “judge,” whom he would bless in dispersing Israel’s enemies. The record is that the Lord put his “Spirit” on these; that is, he empowered them to accomplish his purposes (see Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; and 14:6).

When Zerubbabel was rebuilding the temple of God in Jerusalem, and encountering much opposition, the word of the Lord came to him saying, “Not by might [margin, army], nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.” (Zech. 4:6) This is true of every aspect of our existence, if we are endeavoring to serve the Lord and are looking to him for guidance and help. His Spirit, when enlisted on behalf of his people, can overcome every obstacle in order to accomplish his design in their lives.

In Matthew 12:28 Jesus indicates that his mighty miracles were accomplished by the Spirit of God. He shows that this will be true of all the blessings which will reach the people when the kingdom of God is functioning in the earth. Thus, again, we are assured that the promises of God concerning the healing of the sick and the raising of the dead are sure to be fulfilled. His Spirit will allow no defeat of the divine purpose. How thankful we are that such unlimited power is under the control of a just and loving God—a God who is also infinite in wisdom. Because of this, we know that his Spirit will never be used to crush or injure his people, but always to lift up and bless.

God’s Spirit Everywhere

Some mistakenly speak of the omnipresence of God, meaning that he is present everywhere at the same time. This tends to deny the personality of the Creator. However, God’s Spirit, his power, is everywhere present, and all the time. There is no situation in the whole universe over

which he does not have full control, or could not exercise his power. David wrote, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell [sheol, the death condition], behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."—Ps. 139:6-10

Here David is expressing his confidence that even in death; that is, in "hell," he would not be beyond the reach of divine power. How strange the psalmist's statement would be if hell were a place of fire and torment! But when we accept the scriptural fact that hell is the state or condition of death this expression becomes rich with meaning. It is simply David's poetic way of affirming his belief in the promises of God to restore the dead to life. It means that God's Spirit will reach down into the death state and awaken the dead. This was confirmed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead by the Almighty power of the Father. God did not leave Jesus' soul, his being, in "hell," in sheol.—Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:27, 28, 32; Eph. 1:19, 20

In his original perfection man enjoyed the favor of God. The Lord caused his face to shine upon him. In the light of God's countenance man enjoyed life, for as David wrote, in God's favor there is life. (Ps. 30:5) God provided a beautiful garden home for his human creation, instructing him to multiply and fill the earth, and subdue it—make it all, that is, like the garden spot which God had provided. But this provision of a home and of life was dependent upon man's obedience to divine law, and he disobeyed. Then God hid his face from man, and his human creation became fearful and "troubled." They began to die and to return to the dust. Through the sentence of death the "breath of life" was, to to speak, removed.

But this was not the end of human experience; not the final destiny which God had decreed for man. Through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, God made provision for man to be restored from death. This was to be accomplished by divine power, the same power that gave man life in the first place. The psalmist explains it this way: "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth." (Ps. 104:30) The Spirit of God which "moved upon the face of the waters"—that mighty power which brought into being every atom in the whole great universe, that gave life to every living thing, animate and inanimate—will, in God's due time, reach down into death and restore the dead to life.

Many have supposed that in order to experience life beyond the grave there must be no cessation of life. But this is false reasoning, which does not take into consideration the Spirit or power of God. The psalmist uses a good word to help us over our weakness of faith in the power of God. He said, "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created." When the breath of life reverts to God who gave it, and the body returns to dust, the person has actually ceased, temporarily, to exist. He is as though he "had not been." (Eccles. 12:7; Job 10:18, 19) Thus, what is actually accomplished by the Spirit of God in the resurrection is a re-creation of the individual.

In the original creation of Adam, while he was given a perfect brain, with perfect capacity to think, to reason, within the limits of the human mind, no thoughts were implanted in his brain. These he received later, being impressed upon his mind through his five senses. But in the re-creation of the dead, described in the New Testament by the word "resurrection," the original bank of thoughts which the individual had built up during his former span of life, will be implanted in the new brain, and thus he will again be David, or Isaiah, or John Smith.

The psalmist further explains that when the Spirit of God is sent forth for the re-creation of the human race, the "face of the earth" will also be renewed. When God sentenced our first parents to death he said, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake." (Gen. 3:17) During the thousand years of Christ's reign, when the Spirit of God is restoring the dead to life, this curse upon the earth will also be removed. The Revelator declares that "there shall be no more curse." (Rev. 22:1-3) Then the whole earth will become one vast paradise home in which the restored human race will have the glorious privilege of enjoying God's favor forever.

How wonderful it is to realize that the Spirit of God which moved upon the face of the waters, and prepared the earth for human habitation, will again manifest itself in restoring the dead to life, and in restoring paradise! Yes, God's Spirit will be exercised to provide blessings of health and life for all mankind. Then God's human creatures will join in the song of praise first sung by David, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works: in wisdom has thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches."—Ps. 104:24

However, prior to the time when the Spirit or power of God will reach down into the tomb to restore the dead to life; before the "curse" upon the earth will be removed; and before God's Spirit fills the earth with his glory, and with riches of health and life for the joy of his human creation, there is still another and different manner in which his Spirit operates to accomplish his purposes. It is this functioning of the Holy Spirit which is spoken of in so many ways, and so frequently in the New Testament. It is related to God's dealings with Jesus and with his foot-step followers. Our next article will begin an examination of the Bible's testimony in this connection, and will be entitled, "The Holy Spirit of Truth."

CHAPTER II

The Holy Spirit of Truth

"When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me."—John 15:26

AS WE saw in our previous article, the Holy Spirit is the power of God exerted along any line which he may choose. God used his mighty power to create the universe, to prepare the earth for the habitation of man, and to create man and give him life. Now we wish to examine the Bible's testimony concerning another manner in which God has been using his power in the accomplishment of his purposes; namely, through the influence of his thoughts over the lives of those whom he calls into his service, particularly during this present age.

We all recognize the power of thought. The life of each one of us is controlled by thoughts—either our own, or the thoughts of others, which we allow to influence us. As an illustration, we might suppose the case of a business man who had sent his son to college in a distant city. This son had always been obedient to his father, and continues to be. The time comes when the father, for good reasons of his own, decides that he wants his son to leave college and return home. How does this father bring about the homecoming of his boy?

Since the son is obedient to his father it is not essential to send someone to bring him home by force. All the father

does is to dictate a letter to his son, expressing his desire that the boy return home. A stenographer records the father's thoughts in the form of a letter, posts it, and when the son receives the letter and learns his father's wishes, he returns home. What has happened? Simply this: the father has exercised his power over his son to bring him home from college—the power, that is, of his thoughts.

So, one of the manifestations of the Spirit or power of God is the expression of his thoughts, these thoughts being potent in the lives of those who are devoted to the doing of his will. It is this aspect of divine power that Jesus refers to in our text as the "Spirit of truth." But how does God bring his thoughts, his mind, to bear upon the lives of his Gospel-age servants? Our illustration suggests the answer in part. The Lord has "dictated" his thoughts, not to one "stenographer," but to many, and they have been recorded for the benefit of all who desire to know and do his will. The Bible does not, of course, call them stenographers, but prophets, the "holy men of God," as Peter describes them, who "spake [or wrote] as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."—II Pet. 1:21

The operation of God's Holy Spirit upon the minds of the prophets, who wrote the Old Testament, was miraculous. The prophets recorded the thoughts thus "dictated" to them, but only dimly understood their meaning. Peter explains that it was revealed to them "that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." (I Pet. 1:12) We cannot understand how the prophets were caused to record God's thoughts. The Bible simply explains that it was by the Holy Spirit.

Obviously, then, we can properly say that the Old Testament Scriptures are a product, or work, of the Holy Spirit.

The thoughts of God are recorded in the Old Testament books to be read and pondered at will by his people. But no one could understand the real import of these recorded thoughts of God until his due time arrived, and then the meaning had to be miraculously revealed, which brings to our attention another accomplishment of the Holy Spirit.

The miraculous revealing of the meaning of the Old Testament messages began with Jesus. Doubtless throughout Jesus' childhood Mary had many times told him the circumstances in connection with his birth—that Joseph was not his father; that he was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. This would impress upon Jesus the fact that he was on the earth for a special mission, and therefore he was anxious to learn what that mission was. So at the early age of twelve we find him in the temple discussing matters with the doctors of the Law, and asking them questions. He probably had even memorized much of what had been written, if not all. Now the Holy Spirit was revealing to him its true meaning concerning his own mission on earth, and also the plan of God as a whole. The record states that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where he remained for forty days. The miraculous revelation of truth which the Holy Spirit had unfolded to him was seemingly so overwhelming that he felt the necessity of isolating himself from others for a time that he might have an undisturbed opportunity to adjust himself to the flood of light, of truth, on the Old Testament Scriptures which had entered his mind, and thus be prepared to fulfil his agreement to do his Father's will.

Jesus' Ministry

Throughout the entire course of his ministry Jesus was unfolding the various aspects of truth which had been revealed to him. While he did not himself write down his teachings, yet, under the later direction of the Holy Spirit,

his wonderful words of life were recorded by others, and thus made available for the instruction of all the Lord's people throughout the entire age. And how clearly Jesus emphasized that his teachings were not his own! Referring to himself he said, "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him."—John 3:34

How wonderful, and how reassuring! The giving of the Holy Spirit to Jesus as a power to reveal the thoughts of God was not in a limited measure. It came with such full and complete clarifying brilliance that Jesus understood the thoughts, yes, the very intents of God's heart. This means that we can accept every word which Jesus spoke as reflecting the mind of God. Again Jesus said, "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak."—John 12:49

Toward the close of Jesus' ministry Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Jesus' reply was, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."—John 14:8-10

Jesus did not mean by these words that he and the Heavenly Father were one and the same person. If he had meant this he would not have confused the fact by his further statement concerning the Father dwelling in him, for how can one dwell in himself? The meaning of his words is obvious. He was so fully controlled by the thoughts and will of God that everything he said and did reflected exactly what the Father would say and do were he to appear personally and minister to the people.

What this means to us is that in the words and works of Jesus we have revealed the meaning of the Spirit-inspired writings of the Old Testament, a bringing closer to us of the holy thoughts of God that they might exert their intended influence in our lives. When we read the teachings of Jesus we may know that they reveal the will of God. When Jesus said that we should love our enemies it means that God wants us to love our enemies. When he said, "Ye are the light of the world," we know that it is the Heavenly Father who expects us to be the light of the world. When the Master commanded that we should lay down our lives for the brethren, we should realize that it is his Father who issued that command. And so it is with respect to all the "gracious words" which fell from the Master's lips.

Much Truth Held Back

But we do not have the full will of God revealed through the personal teachings and example of Jesus. He did not give expression to all the wonderful truths which were revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. Jesus confirms this. He said to his disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he [it], the Spirit of truth, is come, he [it] will guide you into all truth." (John 16:12, 13) The minds of the disciples were not then prepared to grasp all the marvelous truths which had been revealed to Jesus. Much, even of what he did tell them, was only vaguely understood by them; and many of his lessons they failed to remember.

In John 14:26 Jesus gives us another promise, that in his name the Father would send the Holy Spirit to his disciples, and that it would be to them as a wonderful "Comforter." The Spirit, he said, "shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." What a wonderful promise! As Jesus indicated to his disciples, there were many truths of the

Father's plan which he had not told them, but these would later be revealed when the Holy Spirit came upon them as it had come upon him, and they would be taught "all things." Nothing which they needed to know in order to complete the divine revelation through their oral and written ministry would be omitted.

Even the great truths which Jesus did relate to his disciples, the truths which they failed to understand, and in many instances did not remember, were to be unfolded to them by the Holy Spirit. It will "bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you," is the assurance Jesus gave to his disciples. It was at Pentecost that this promise of the "Comforter"—the "Spirit of truth" mentioned in our text—came upon the disciples as they waited and prayed in the "upper room" in Jerusalem for the fulfilment of the Master's promise.—Acts 1:13, 14

The disciples knew that Jesus had been raised from the dead. He had appeared to them on several occasions. It was at the last of these "visits" in their midst that he instructed the disciples that they "should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father"—the promise, that is, of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:4) Jesus explained that the fulfilment of this promise would equip them to be his special witnesses "unto the uttermost part of the earth."—Acts 1:8

When first promising the Holy Spirit and explaining that it would testify of him, Jesus added, "And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." (John 15:27) In this again we see the overruling providences of God, the working of his Holy Spirit in the revelation of his plans and purposes for the guidance of his people. Jesus' disciples, particularly his apostles, had, as Jesus said, been with him from the beginning. They had heard his wonderful words of life and had witnessed his marvelous miracles. They lived in the atmosphere of

peace, and love, and kindness, and loyalty to God which radiated from him. They noted his boldness in refuting the misleading teachings of his enemies. They knew him because they lived with him, and knowing him was a great step toward knowing the Father when later the Holy Spirit came upon them as it had come upon him.

The Holy Spirit "Shed Forth"

At Pentecost the promise to send the Holy Spirit to the disciples was fulfilled. There was a mighty demonstration of power on that memorable day. Explaining it, Peter said that Jesus "having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." (Acts 2:33) The Holy Spirit was "shed forth." There was no way the translators could distort this statement to make it seem as though the Holy Spirit was a third person in a trinity of gods. A person cannot be "shed forth," but a power can; and it was this power, the "Holy Spirit of truth," which came upon the waiting disciples at Pentecost.

While all the disciples who waited at Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit were richly blessed when it was "shed forth," only the special apostles received from it a miraculous illumination of their minds. They were specially designated by the fact that the Spirit rested upon them, being visibly manifested by cloven tongues of fire. These, in turn, through their oral teachings and their epistles, have made the "vision" plain for the remainder of God's people throughout the age. God does not miraculously and directly reveal his truth to his people as a whole.

And with what clarity the great truths of the Old Testament, some of which had been enlarged upon and made clear by Jesus, were now fully revealed to the apostles! The things which Jesus said he had withheld from them, and the truths he had taught them and they had forgotten,

all took form in their minds, and they were ready at once to embark upon their ministry of witnessing for Jesus and explaining his part and their own in the divine plan of human redemption and salvation.

Notice a case in point. The Apostle Peter had tried in different ways to prevent the death of Jesus. When the Master told his disciples that he was going to Jerusalem where he expected to be arrested and put to death, Peter endeavored to dissuade him from thus voluntarily surrendering to his enemies. Later, as the mob came out from Jerusalem to arrest Jesus, Peter drew his sword in an attempt to prevent the arrest. Although Peter was later assured that Jesus had been raised from the dead, he still did not understand the meaning of his death. Indeed, he had given up his hope in Jesus, and suggested to the others that they go back into the fishing business.

But when the Holy Spirit was "shed forth" upon the apostles at Pentecost the "mystery" was made plain, and we find Peter, in his pentecostal sermon, quoting prophecies from the Old Testament to show that God had foreknown and foretold the Redeemer's death. (Acts 2:25-32) The prophecies of Jesus' death and resurrection had been in the Old Testament all along, but Peter did not comprehend their meaning. Now he did, for the Holy Spirit of truth had been "shed forth" to illuminate his mind, and the minds of the other apostles, that they might be inspired witnesses of the great truths of the divine plan as they are centered in Christ Jesus.

Jesus, in promising to shed forth the Holy Spirit, said that it would be a "Comforter" to his disciples. And how true this proved to be! When Jesus was taken from them and crucified, they were made sad of heart. It was more, much more, than the loss in death of a beloved friend. They had accepted Jesus as the foretold Messiah. The disciples understood the surface truths of the Old Testament.

They knew that the God of Israel had promised to send a Messiah through the line of David, and that this great King was to establish a kingdom, or government, which eventually would exert world-wide influence and control. They believed Jesus was this great King, and they believed that in associating themselves with him they would have a share in his kingdom.

With Jesus' death this hope was shattered; but only until the Holy Spirit was shed forth, for then they realized that the messianic kingdom was to be more effective and more glorious than they had even dreamed that it could. They also now knew why it had been necessary for Jesus to die; that it was to redeem the world. They now knew that in his resurrection by divine power Jesus had been exalted to a height of glory beyond the comprehension of their finite minds, and that if they became conformed to his character likeness and faithfully laid down their lives as his witness they would, in God's due time, share the glory of his kingdom, and the glory of his exalted position on the throne of God. How wonderfully they were comforted by the Holy Spirit!

Jesus had said that when the Holy Spirit of truth came it would show them "things to come," and it did. (John 16: 13) Shortly after Pentecost we find Peter preaching another wonderful sermon. It was prompted by a miracle which he had performed—the healing of a man who had been lame from birth. Peter explained that this miracle was accomplished through the power of the resurrected Jesus. He further explained that Jesus was to come again, and that when he did return there would be "times of restitution [or restoration] of all things." Then he added that this glorious feature of the divine plan for saving a lost world from sin, sickness, and death had been spoken "by the mouth of all God's holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:19-21) Not until the Holy Spirit of truth

was shed forth at Pentecost did Peter understand this great truth of restitution for a lost world, or realize that it was the theme of all God's holy prophets.

The pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit completed the miraculous revelation which was given to Jesus at Jordan, and thus through his teachings and theirs, the revelation of the divine will was completed, and is now contained in the written Word. No further miraculous revelation is needed. Paul emphasized this when he wrote to Timothy, saying, "All scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."—II Tim. 3:16, 17

The "all scripture given by inspiration of God" is what we speak of as the Old and New Testaments. In these two parts of the Bible, therefore, God has recorded and revealed his thoughts—those thoughts, which he has designed shall exert power over and in the lives of those who, during the present age, are fully dedicated to him. In this wonderful arrangement, miraculously provided, is manifested the manner in which the power of God, the Holy Spirit of truth, operates in the minds and hearts of those who surrender to its influence, and thus accomplishes the Creator's designs in the hearts and lives of his people.

CHAPTER III

Baptized by the Holy Spirit

"By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many."—I Corinthians 12:13, 14

JESUS was the first to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. This was at the river Jordan. His baptism in water by John, however, was not the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came upon him as he came up out of the water. An outward demonstration of this baptism of the Holy Spirit was given, enabling John the Baptist to bear testimony concerning it, which he did. John explained that the One who had sent him to baptize with water had said, "Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Spirit."—John 1:33

Jesus received this baptism of the Holy Spirit of truth from the Heavenly Father, and from John's testimony we learn that Jesus would, in turn, baptize his followers with the Holy Spirit, which he did. After his resurrection, when he appeared to his disciples for the last time before his ascension, he said to them, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence." (Acts 1:5) This occurred at Pentecost. There Peter testified that Jesus, being at the right hand of God, "and having received of the Father the

promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.”—Acts 2:33

Peter spoke of that “which ye now see and hear.” The Holy Spirit itself was neither seen nor heard at Pentecost. What the disciples saw and heard was an outward demonstration of that which had occurred. A similar demonstration was later given when Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, was accepted into the family of disciples. Concerning this we read that while Peter was preaching “the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the Word.” The Jewish believers present were astonished that the Holy Spirit should thus be poured out upon Gentiles.—Acts 10:44, 45; 11:16, 17

This special outpouring, or baptism, of the Holy Spirit upon a little group of Gentile converts was evidently designed to give assurance to all Gentile converts that they were not excluded from being followers of Christ, and from receiving the blessings which belong to them. This was essential, for the demonstration at Pentecost was exclusively to Jewish believers. Paul seems to have had this in mind when, in our text, he explains that “by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free: and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”

It is not scriptural to suppose that these outward manifestations of the Holy Spirit’s baptism should continue. Actually, there is not an outpouring, or baptism, of the Holy Spirit upon each individual believer. We should not expect a special baptism of the Spirit every time someone accepts Christ and dedicates himself to his service. Individually, consecrated believers receive of the Holy Spirit’s baptism as they come into the “body” of Christ.

The word “baptize” is a translation of the Greek word baptizo, which means to immerse, or bury—literally to “make whelmed,” as Prof. Strong explains. In our text,

Paul says of Christians that they have all been baptized by the Spirit into the "body." Jesus is the Head of this symbolic body, and his faithful followers constitute the other parts, or members. In II Corinthians 5:17 Paul informs us that "if any man be in Christ [that is, a member of his 'body'], he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." This assertion indicates that Jesus the "Head," together with the "members" of his mystical body, constitute a "new creation."

In Ephesians 2:10 we read that "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." In chapter 4, verses 23 and 24, Paul admonishes, "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and . . . put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Again, speaking of those who are members of the body of Christ, Paul writes, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." (Gal. 6:15) In other words, the important consideration for those who are "in Christ" Jesus is that they are "new creatures," members of a new creation.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit, then, is vitally associated with the bringing forth of a "new creation." We have seen that the original creative work of God was accomplished by his mighty power, his Spirit. In this work God's Spirit functioned both as a physical force and as a creative, life-giving power. His Spirit then moved upon "the face of the waters," and it "moved" everywhere throughout the entire universe. It still does, and mightily so. And the Scriptures reveal that now his Spirit is operating to bring forth a "new creation."

But how differently God's Spirit is functioning to accomplish this great purpose, than it did in the original creation! Now it is operating in the realm of thought, and with the consent and co-operation of those who are being

made a part of God's new and spiritual creation. As we saw in our previous article, thousands of years were consumed by God in bringing his thoughts down to the level of the human mind, and in a form in which they could be studied and acted upon. Now we have the result in the inspired Word. How wonderful is this arrangement, in that it allows us to read and ponder, accept or reject, obey or disobey, co-operate or oppose, as we choose. In this wise manner God is able to secure the co-operation of those whom he chooses to be a part of his "new creation" without in the slightest degree interfering with their free moral agency.

In all the former creations of intelligent beings, they were first created and then tested as to their willingness or unwillingness to obey divine law. This was true of the angels, some of whom failed under test. It was true of man, and he failed, and through his failure death condemnation came upon the entire human race. But with God's new creation it is different, for they are being tested as they are created. This means that when the work of creation is complete in the case of each individual who will compose the new creation class, the testing will be over.

The reason for this is obvious, for the completion of the work of creating this class will find each one in it on the divine plane of life, exalted to immortality, and therefore death-proof. It would be too late to test these after they were fully created because then the death penalty could not be applied to any who proved wilfully disobedient.

Baptism—Obedience

It is this necessity for absolute obedience on the part of every new creature in Christ that helps to give vital meaning to the use of the word baptism in connection with those who become members of the body of Christ—the new creation class. Since this word means burial, or submerging, it

suggests the burial of our wills into the will of God, as expressed through Christ our Head. Certainly no symbol could better emphasize wholehearted and complete obedience to the Lord. In Revelation 20:4 it is figuratively spoken of as "beheading." A person who has no head of his own cannot plan for himself. If his only Head is Christ then he has no plans and no will of his own. Such is the general thought of baptism. It is a burial, or submerging, and in this case it is the burial of the will that is accomplished in the lives of the "new creation" class by the Holy Spirit.

The Church

In Ephesians 1:22, 23 Paul speaks of the "church" which is Christ's "body." The word "church" is a translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*, which simply means "a calling out," or a called-out class. Jesus said to his disciples, "I have chosen you out of the world." (John 15:19) All the true disciples of Christ are of this chosen, or selected class. These constitute the true church of Christ, his body members, the new creation class.

In Acts 2:47 we are told that, beginning with Pentecost, God added daily to the church. This is a significant statement, for it emphasizes that no one can be made a member of the true church of Christ by human authority. It is God's work. The new creation is his creation. The bringing forth of the new creation is accomplished by the power and authority of the Holy Spirit. It is the power of the Holy Spirit through the Word of truth that creates believers, calls them from the world, and invites them to accept the headship of Christ over their lives.

But the Holy Spirit of truth does not compel anyone to surrender to the divine will. This is wholly a voluntary matter on the part of each individual who takes the step and thereby comes in under the Holy Spirit's baptism. Very

appropriately, and to help us appreciate more fully our own part in this arrangement, this voluntary surrender of the will is spoken of as "baptism," a baptism into Jesus Christ. Since baptism into Christ means the acceptance of his headship, and therefore our own beheading, it is fittingly described as a death baptism.

Paul wrote, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Rom. 6:3) True, this refers to Jesus' sacrificial death, and the fact that we have the opportunity of dying sacrificially with him. But Jesus' sacrificial death was in conformity with the Father's will for him. It was Jesus' devotion to his Father's will, his voluntary yielding to the influence of the Holy Spirit of truth, that led him into death as the Redeemer and Savior of the world. And it is the death of our wills, and the acceptance of the divine will as revealed by the Holy Spirit of truth, that will lead us into sacrificial death with Jesus. It is thus that we are planted together in the likeness of his death.—Rom. 6:4, 5

Thus we see that while the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a collective one, and upon the entire church—all the "called out" class—in order to participate in it we must individually be baptized into Christ by yielding ourselves in full surrender and devotion to the Lord. This is our part as individuals. We are "buried with him in baptism," writes Paul in Colossians 2:12. This does not mean a burial in water, but a burial of our wills in full consecration to do his will; even as Jesus buried his will when he said to his Father, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God."—Ps. 40:7

Immersion in water is merely a symbol of the burial of our wills into the will of Christ. And it is a very apt and beautiful symbol. In carrying it out the candidate voluntarily places himself in the hands of the immerser, and by him is plunged under the water. How helpless the candi-

date is when thus held under the water! It would mean his actual death were he not raised from the water. So we present ourselves to the Lord, telling him to do with us as he will, and we thus surrender to God in the knowledge that the Holy Spirit of truth which led Jesus to a sacrificial death also expresses the same divine design for us.

It is not a case of saying to the Lord that we will do his will up to the point that it becomes too costly, or too difficult. There can be no conditions attached to an acceptable consecration to the Lord, a consecration that will assure us an entrance into the body of Christ, where we come under the influence of the Holy Spirit's baptism. It must be a full, complete surrender. And it is this, as we have seen, that is symbolized by water immersion.

Paul explains that those who are thus buried with Christ "should walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6:4) Actually, those who fulfil the terms of their consecration faithfully even unto the actual death of their humanity will be raised in the likeness of Christ's resurrection, to live and reign with him a thousand years. But when a consecration to be dead with Christ is wholehearted and sincere, there will be the beginning of a new life even while the outward man is perishing. And the resurrection to life with Christ as well as the newness of life experienced now are both beautifully illustrated in the water baptism symbol by the candidate's being raised up out of the water.

The attitude of full surrender to the Lord is expressed by the Apostle Paul in Romans 12:1, where he exhorts us to present our bodies "a living sacrifice." He explains that such a sacrifice is "holy"—through Christ, of course—and is acceptable to God. Then, in the next verse, he admonishes us not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

When one first makes a consecration to do God's will, he has only a general idea of what the divine will is. He knows of Jesus' invitation to deny self, take up his cross, and follow him. He knows he is to renounce his own will and ways, but the details involved have to be learned as day by day one continues to look to the Head for instruction and guidance. However, all the necessary directions are in the written Word, put there by the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, and if our surrender is complete we will be guided by them.

Paul wrote that we should prove what the will of the Lord is, and then, through several chapters, beginning with Romans 12, he presents detail after detail of the divine will. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to pen these details for our guidance. They are not in the Word just to be read and admired. They are there, together with all other instructions of the Holy Spirit, to help transform our minds, to make us like Christ, more and more responsive to every indication of the divine will as expressed through him. All of this is involved in coming under the baptism of the Holy Spirit of truth.

"That They May Be One"

Because of Jesus' full obedience to the will of his Father as revealed to him through the Spirit of the truth he could say, "I and my Father are one." (John 10:30) Being solicitous for those who would become members of his body, accepting the divine headship through him as the Head of the church, the called-out ones of the present age, he prayed for them. And what a wonderful prayer! "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou,

Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”
—John 17:17-21

The new creation class is sanctified and made one with the Father and with Jesus through the Word of truth. One cannot thus be in full harmony with the Father and the Son without being fully obedient to the divine will as revealed by the Holy Spirit of truth. Those called out of the world, chosen by God to attain to this unity with him and with Jesus, are spoken of by the Apostle Peter as the “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience.” (I Pet. 1:2) Jesus prayed that these might be sanctified by the truth. Peter says they are sanctified by the Spirit. The thought is the same, for the power of the inspired Word of God is the Holy Spirit of truth.

Peter explains that these called ones, the church, are “elect according to the foreknowledge of God”; that is, their selection is according to God’s foreordained conditions. The Apostle Paul explains what these conditions are. In Romans 8:29 we read that those whom God foreknew “he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” To be conformed to Christ’s image is to be, like him, fully at one with the Heavenly Father, and fully obedient to the Holy Spirit of truth that was “shed forth” by him in the name of his Son the Head of all in the new creation class.

The Unity of the Spirit

The unity of the body members of Christ with their Head is brought about by baptism, or immersion, into the will of God as expressed through the Head, is further discussed by the Apostle Paul in the fourth chapter of Ephesians. He writes that “with all lowliness and meekness, [and] with long-suffering,” we should forbear “one another in love;

endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”—vss. 2, 3

Paul continues, “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” (vss. 4-6) “Through all, and in you all”—compare this language with Jesus’ prayer as recorded in John 17:21-23. Paul adds, “Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” (vs. 7) To maintain the “unity of the Spirit” it is essential to realize that not everyone in the body is given the same office. Not all have the same work to do. As Paul explains in I Corinthians 12, some are as feet, some as eyes, and some as hands, in the body. But all are subject to the directions which emanate from the Head.

In verses 8 and 9 of Ephesians 4 Paul reminds us of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, and confirms the fact that when he ascended he “gave gifts unto men.” This is a reference to what occurred at Pentecost, only here Paul is explaining the very practical manner in which the baptism of the Holy Spirit is effective for every member of the church. He uses the word gifts—plural—and then explains what they are, “He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.”—vs. 11

How reasonable and practical! If the Holy Spirit had merely come upon the disciples as a miraculous display of divine power, certainly less would have been accomplished. But it resulted in their being the inspired apostles of the Lamb. Through their inspired teachings other servants became qualified to minister to the church. Through them all, each in his own capacity, the Holy Spirit of the truth is diffused for the building up of the entire new creation class. Paul explains that these “gifts” were provided “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry,

for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”—vss. 12, 13

Gifts and Fruit of the Spirit

When the church, representatively, was baptized with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, that baptism carried with it certain miraculous “gifts,” such as speaking with tongues, the ability to perform miracles, etc. These gifts came only upon the apostles, and could be imparted to others by the laying on of their hands. Those receiving these gifts from the apostles could not pass them on to others, so in due course they ceased.

These gifts served a useful purpose in the Early Church. On the day of Pentecost the gift of tongues enabled the apostles to witness the truth concerning Jesus to Jews gathered at Jerusalem from all over the then known world—Jews, many of whom may have understood only the language of the countries in which they were domiciled. The gift of tongues continued to serve a useful purpose until there were believers in each territory who knew the language there spoken. As the new creation class spread out into the various countries, and the church became established, the need for the gift of tongues no longer existed.

The ability to perform miracles was also a great aid in connection with the establishment of the Early Church. Those early believers were in a very hostile world. They were scorned and persecuted by both Jews and Gentiles, and the miracle-working power of the apostles was a source of encouragement to all the believers, confirming their faith that the cause in which they had enlisted was the Lord's, and that the great God of Israel would not allow it to fail. Miracles also served to witness to an unbelieving

and gainsaying world. But when the church became better established, this gift also ceased to function.

The fruit of the Spirit is different. Paul wrote, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's [are baptized by one Spirit into him] have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit [in the body of Christ which is controlled by the Holy Spirit of truth], let us also walk in the Spirit."—Gal. 5:22-25

After mentioning the various gifts which had been bestowed upon members of the Early Church, Paul concluded, "Yet show I unto you a more excellent way." (I Cor. 12:31) This is the last verse of the chapter, and in the first verse of the next chapter Paul begins to enlarge upon that "more excellent way," which he reveals to be the way of love. Love is an "excellent way" because it is the way of God, who so loved the world that he gave his Son to redeem mankind from sin and death. It is the way of Christ whose love prompted and encouraged him to lay down his life for both the church and the world.

If we are to remain in Christ, and be perfected as members of God's new creation by the Holy Spirit of truth, the "more excellent way" of love must become our way. Thus we will be one with Jesus and one with the Father, even as they are one. May the Holy Spirit of truth by which the whole body of Christ is baptized, continue to work in us for the accomplishment of this divinely foreordained condition of eternal membership in God's new creation!

CHAPTER IV

The Anointing of the Spirit

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me: because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn."—Isaiah 61:1, 2

IN THE expression, "anointing of the Spirit," we have brought to our attention a very important aspect of the Holy Spirit's work in the lives of those who compose God's new creation. The figure of anointing is based on the ancient custom of pouring oil on the heads of priests and kings to signify their divine appointment to office. This ceremony was called anointing. The anointing of the Holy Spirit is, therefore, that function by which the Lord's consecrated people are designated, or authorized, to occupy an official position in the great work and plan of God for the recovery of mankind from sin and death.

In the synagogue at Nazareth, and near the beginning of his ministry, Jesus read from the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the anointing of the Spirit, and explained, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." (Luke 4:16-21) The Apostle Peter confirms this, saying, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power:

who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.”—Acts 10:38

The significance of the anointing symbol is again indicated in Hebrews 1:7-9. The apostle says, “Who [God] maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire; but unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” From this inspired statement we learn that Jesus was not only anointed to preach glad tidings, but also to be the highly exalted King in his kingdom, an anointing to such a high position of dignity and authority that all the angels of God are commanded to worship him.—Heb. 1:6

From the very beginning of his ministry Jesus was faithful to the service for which he was anointed. As Peter testified, he “went about doing good.” Jesus said, “I must work the works of him that sent me.” (John 9:4) Jesus knew that he had been authorized to preach glad tidings to the meek and to bind up the brokenhearted. He knew that he had been anointed to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. He proclaimed the glad tidings both by precept and example. In Luke 8:1 we read that Jesus “went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him.”

Church Also Anointed

In II Corinthians 1:21 we read, “Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God.” The “us” class here referred to are those who are “in Christ,” that is, members of his “body.” All those thus in Christ share in the anointing of the Holy Spirit which came upon Jesus, the Head of the body, at Jordan. In I John

2:27 the apostle speaks of the anointing "which ye have received of him," that is, of the Heavenly Father, through Christ, and because of being in his body. The anointing of the Holy Spirit means the same for the body members as it did for Jesus, the Head.

When Jesus promised his disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit, he said it would "teach" them "all things." (John 14:26) John confirms this. He wrote that the "anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie." (I John 2:27) In this same verse John also says, "Ye need not that any man teach you." This seems to be a reference to the human philosophy extant in John's day, and he is emphasizing that the Holy Spirit teaches the anointed ones all things they need to know concerning God's plan in order to serve him properly, and especially that they should abide in Christ.

The Holy Spirit of God miraculously revealed to Jesus an understanding of those truths previously written "in the volume of the book," that is, the Old Testament Scriptures. A similar miraculous revelation occurred in the minds of the apostles at Pentecost. Through the ministry of Jesus and the apostles, the New Testament has been provided to supplement the Old, and thus reveal to the remainder of the body members the essential truths of the divine plan. Thus the anointing of the Holy Spirit and all that it implies of instruction for the church as a whole is made clear to us in the written Word. And then the Lord, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, has provided pastors, teachers, and evangelists as helpers in the understanding of the Holy Scriptures.

A Diploma

The authority given to the new creation class by the Holy Spirit is in some respects like a doctor's diploma. When we see a diploma in a doctor's office we realize that it not only signifies authority to practice medicine but also

implies qualifications acquired through years of study and training. So it is with those who are anointed to preach glad tidings, and to reign as kings and priests. It is not merely that they are honored with this authority, but it also implies essential study and preparation. This is why both Jesus and John associate being taught all things with the anointing.

Paul wrote, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (II Tim. 2:15) Notice how the matter of rightly dividing the word of truth is essential to being a workman for God that needeth not to be ashamed. Truly many will be ashamed who thought they were working for God by preaching eternal torture for the wicked. This extreme illustration emphasizes the fact that those who are truly anointed to serve God must be and are qualified—qualified because they have learned how rightly to divide the Word of truth.

The Gospel of the Kingdom

The "anointing" authority to represent God also reaches us through the written Word. It is not merely a matter of our feeling an urge that we would like to preach the truth, for definite authority is given us in the Word; and not only authority, but exhortations to be faithful in the exercise of our privileges as the anointed of God. Jesus said, "Ye are the light of the world." And again, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5:14, 16) These, shall we say, are "anointing" texts of the Bible, texts put in the Bible by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to authorize and encourage the body members to proclaim the truth, and to do it faithfully.

Jesus said of himself, "I am the light of the world." (John 8:12) He said this by the authority of the Old Testa-

ment Scriptures—"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings." (Isa. 61:1) When he said to his disciples, "Ye are the light of the world," he indicated that the "anointing" authority to serve the Lord in this honored capacity would be passed on to them—and at Pentecost it was.

The Apostle Paul explains this clearly and beautifully. He wrote, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ." (II Cor. 5:17-20) The first verse of the next chapter reads, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

This is another "anointing" passage, another of those revealing statements of the Word, inspired by the Holy Spirit, which gives assurance that all those in Christ are ministers of reconciliation, ambassadors for Christ, and workers together with him. While the baptism of the Spirit emphasizes immersion into the divine will, the "anointing" figure of speech emphasizes that one aspect of the Lord's will is recognition of the honor of serving as his ambassadors, and the manifestation of the same zeal which consumed Jesus as he went about "doing good."

Another Old Testament "anointing" scripture is Psalm 145:10-12. It reads, "All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom." This is undoubtedly one of the Spirit-inspired passages which encouraged Jesus to faith-

fulness as he went from place to place “preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.” (Luke 8:1) And it should be of equal power in the lives of the Lord’s saints today.

Still another “anointing” text of the Old Testament, and one which applies particularly to the last remaining members of the body of Christ on earth before the kingdom is fully established, is Isaiah 52:7. We quote: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!” These “feet of him” are not beautiful to the world. For the most part they are despised, and their message scorned. But God sees in them the beauty of holiness—the holiness of loyal obedience to him and to his Word.

Glad Tidings

The kingdom message which the saints are commissioned to preach is essentially one of good news. This is shown in our text—Isaiah 61:1,2—which Jesus applied to himself, and which also applies to every member of his mystical body, for the anointing covers all. It is a commission to preach “good tidings unto the meek.” The authorization is to proclaim the message to those who are meek, that is, teachable. True, we are to “sow beside all waters,” but we are not to force the truth upon anyone. (Isa. 32:20) The meek, after hearing a little of the message, will seek for more, and these are the ones to whom we should give special attention.

We are to proclaim “liberty to the captives” and the “opening of the prison to them that are bound.” The whole world is in bondage to sin and death. The meek who respond to the good tidings should be told that, through faith, demonstrated by a full dedication of themselves to the Lord, they can be free from bondage, and enjoy liberty

in Christ. Those who are in the great prison-house of death cannot, of course, hear the good tidings, but we can assure their living friends and relatives that the prison-house of death will, in God's due time, be opened and all death's captives set free. What a message this is to bind up the brokenhearted!

We are also commissioned to proclaim "the acceptable year of the Lord." This is a reference to the Gospel-age call to sacrifice in following in the footsteps of Jesus. When explaining this feature of the divine plan we are to assure those interested that in presenting their bodies "a living sacrifice," they will be "holy and acceptable" to the Lord. (Rom. 12:1) Jesus, our Head and Exemplar, incorporated this aspect of the Gospel in his message in that he invited his disciples to deny themselves and take up their cross and follow him. He knew that beginning with Pentecost their sacrifices would be acceptable.

Another part of the Holy Spirit's commission is to "proclaim . . . the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn." There is much said in both the Old and New Testaments concerning "the day of vengeance." The Apostle Paul describes it as the "day of the Lord" in which, while the nations are saying "peace and safety," "sudden destruction" comes upon them, "as travail upon a woman with child." (I Thess. 5:1-4) Daniel foretold it to be "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation," and Jesus, quoting Daniel, described this period as one of "great tribulation."—Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21, 22

It is this day of God's vengeance upon Satan's world that brings the present age to a close. Beyond it will come the full manifestation of Messiah's kingdom through which all the families of the earth will be blessed. Without question, we are now living in the midst of this day of vengeance. It is this fact that explains why, since 1914, there has been an almost continuous "distress of nations, with perplexity,"

and why the world is filled with fear. (Luke 21:25-28) Jesus said it would be a time when "all the tribes of the earth" would "mourn" because of this severe trouble which would come upon them.—Matt. 24:30

It is noteworthy that when Jesus quoted the Holy Spirit's commission for service, and indicated that it applied to him, he did not include "the day of vengeance of our God." He properly understood that this day of vengeance was still future, and that it would be a misapplication of Scripture to announce that it was upon the nations in his day. However, since the anointing which he received reaches down to all his body members, and since the last of these are now living in this time of trouble, they are commissioned to proclaim the facts concerning it.

But this does not imply that the anointed ones should pronounce vengeance upon the world. This is the prerogative of the Lord alone. Our commission is merely to announce the meaning of this period of severe distress of nations, to explain that a world, or social order, is being destroyed because of its sin and selfishness, and that in its place Messiah's kingdom will be established. It is significant that coupled with the commission to proclaim the day of vengeance is the statement "to comfort all that mourn." The whole world is mourning because of this time of great tribulation, and a proper explanation of what is taking place in the world is a great comfort to those who have faith to believe the promises of God.

Jesus said of our day that the hearts of the people would fail them as they looked ahead to the things coming upon the earth. (Luke 21:26) Another "anointing" text of the Old Testament reads, "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you." (Isa. 35:4) Here, again, is indicated that proclaiming the day of vengeance is, in effect, explaining to

those who have a hearing ear that the present trouble upon the world, the world-wide distress, anxiety, and fear is because the Lord has come "with vengeance," but that his objective is not vindictive, for he has "come to save you." So we can say to those who will listen, You do not need to fear, for the kingdom of Christ is about to be manifested for the blessing of all mankind, and in that kingdom "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."
—Isa. 52:10

Mourners in Zion

Isaiah 61:3—the verse following our text—mentions another aspect of service commissioned by the Holy Spirit. It is the comforting of those in Zion who mourn, "that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." "Zion" is one of the symbolic names which the Scriptures give to the spiritual phase of Christ's kingdom, and it often applies to the Lord's people who are now being prepared for the kingdom. These are the Zion class. The way of sacrifice in which they walk is a narrow, difficult one. They are frowned upon by the world, persecuted by nominal Christians, and ostracized by their friends. Many, at times, become temporarily discouraged, and need to be comforted, and everyone in the body is commissioned by the Holy Spirit to watch for those who need special help, and give them all the assistance possible.

We find examples of this in the New Testament. In Galatians 6:9 we read, "Let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Hebrews 12:3 reads, "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." And then we have that timely admonition by the Apostle James, an "anointing" text admonishing us to comfort those in Zion who mourn—"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them

pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick [the weary—same Greek word as that translated “wearied” in Hebrews 12:3], and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.—James 5:14, 15

James says, “The Lord shall raise him up.” Isaiah 61:3 states that those who are given the “oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness” shall be called “trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord.” In other words, we are commissioned to do all we can to assist those who mourn, who are weary in well-doing, or in any way are spiritually sick. And, where the heart is right the Lord will give strength so that the “lame” will not be turned out of the way but will remain “the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.”—Heb. 12:13

All Body Members Anointed

The anointing of the Holy Spirit of truth which came upon Jesus, as it reaches down to the members of his body, includes all who are in the body. Abilities to proclaim the Gospel of the kingdom may and do vary, but each one is to be faithful and zealous according to the ability possessed. The fact that all are members of the same body suggests cooperation, just as the various parts of a natural body work together harmoniously under the direction of the head.

In I Corinthians, chapter 12, and in Ephesians, chapter 4, Paul explains that the Lord has arranged special services for some who are in the body. There are apostles, prophets [public expounders], pastors, teachers, evangelists, etc. Not all are anointed to serve in these capacities. Aside from the apostles and the servants to the “seven churches” of Revelation, chapters 2 and 3, these special servants are chosen by the Lord through the vote of his people in their local groups, or ecclesias. But to have the Lord’s approval

they must meet the qualifications set forth by the Holy Spirit of truth in the written word. These qualifications are set forth in I Timothy 3:1-13, and in Titus 1:7-9

Future Service

In Hebrews 1:9 we are told that Jesus was anointed with the "oil [symbolic of the Holy Spirit] of gladness above his fellows"; that is, to a position of honor and service above angels and principalities and powers. This, as we have noted, indicates that the anointing of the Holy Spirit carries over to the work of Christ and his church in glory, when together they will reign as kings and priests for the blessing of the world with peace and health and life and joy through the agencies of the kingdom. This means that all the texts of the Bible, and there are many, which give assurance to the faithful that if they suffer with Christ they will reign with him, are "anointing" texts whereby the Holy Spirit of truth makes it plain that we have been invited into a glorious partnership with the Heavenly Father and with his beloved Son, a partnership in his great project of restitution.

One of these "anointing" texts pertaining to the future work to which all the faithful have been appointed is Isaiah 49:8, 9. In II Corinthians 6:1, 2, Paul quotes from the 8th verse and applies it to those who are in Christ. Verses 8 and 9 together read, "Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee [this is the 'acceptable year of the Lord' mentioned in our text], and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and will give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places."

In this wonderful passage which the Lord has put in his

Word by his Holy Spirit we are given the assurance, not only that the Lord will help and preserve his people during this time when they are being prepared for kingdom glory, but also has authorized them to "establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages." Man's original inheritance was to live on the earth, and to have dominion over it. Through sin he lost both life and dominion. His inheritance became desolate. But to the worthy ones of the next age the Lord will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matt. 25:34) The anointing of the body members of Christ authorizes them to participate with him in extending this invitation to the "sheep" class during the "times of restitution of all things."

We are also anointed to say to the prisoners of death, "Go forth." During the present age, all the anointed have the blessed privilege of proclaiming that in the kingdom age the great prison-house of death will be opened, and that all who are "bound" therein will be set free. A blessed message! But those who prove worthy to live and reign with Christ, when his kingdom is fully established, will help fulfil what they said would take place. Then, instead of merely proclaiming that the dead will be raised, they will have the wonderful privilege of actually saying to the prisoners of death, "Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves."

No wonder the apostles said that the "oil" which anointed Jesus to his high position in glory and in the kingdom was the "oil of gladness"! Since we share in the same anointing it will be gladness for us also—joy unspeakable, as we participate with our Lord in wiping tears from the faces of all who mourn, by destroying the cause of their mourning, that is, by destroying sin and death, and all the evils which, throughout the ages, have continued to plague a sin-sick and dying race. A glorious prospect!

CHAPTER V

Born of the Spirit

"Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."—John 3:3

THE words of our text were addressed by Jesus to Nicodemus, a Pharisee who came to the Master by night for the purpose of learning more about him and his teachings. The text calls our attention to another feature of the divine plan which is accomplished by the Holy Spirit or power of God; namely, that those who are to live and reign with Christ in the kingdom which is to bless all the families of the earth must first of all be "born" into a new life. Jesus used the invisible power of the wind as an illustration of one of the characteristics of that new life—"So is everyone that is born of the Spirit."—John 3:8

Nicodemus did not understand what Jesus meant by being "born of the Spirit." He asked, "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" (vs. 4) Jesus explained, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (vs. 6) It is doubtful if Nicodemus understood this explanation. It conveys to us the fact that the thought of birth in connection with the new life which Jesus is discussing is used in a symbolic sense. It is not, as Nicodemus suggested, a case of entering again into a mother's womb to be literally born the second time.

Here, as the case so frequently is in the Bible, a figure of speech is used to help us understand a great truth. The words born or birth instantly conjure up in our minds the idea of a new life. So Jesus is saying that through the power of the Holy Spirit some were to experience a new birth, meaning simply that they were to attain to a new life; a life so unlike the one that is "born of the flesh" that those who are born into it will be both invisible and powerful. Since these are born by the Holy Spirit or power of God, they become spiritual sons of God. But it is impossible for our finite minds to grasp all that this spiritual birth will mean. John wrote, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that . . . we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."—I John 3:2

While the birth of the Spirit does not involve the necessity of entering literally into a mother's womb to be "born again," the metaphor is carried out with considerable detail by the various writers of the New Testament as they refer to this aspect of the Holy Spirit's work in the hearts and lives of the Lord's consecrated believers. Unfortunately our English translations of the Bible in most instances fail to present clearly what the writers had in mind. This has led to the erroneous view that one can be born of the Spirit while still in the flesh. Out of this error has come the expression "born-again Christians."

Sometimes in discussions, when someone is at a loss to think of a word that expresses exactly what he wishes to say, the remark is made, "The Greeks have a word for it." But this is far from being true with respect to classical or New Testament Greek. A case in point is in connection with the matter of being "born again." In the English language we have two words which describe the coming into being of a new life—begetting and birth. But in the Greek language there is only one word to describe both

the begettal and the birth. That word is **gennao**. When used by Jesus and the apostles one has to determine by the context whether begettal or birth is referred to, or whether or not what is meant is the complete process of bringing into existence of a new life.

It is the Greek word **gennao** that is used in Matthew 1:1-16 where the genealogy of Jesus is given. "Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren," the record states. The word "begat" is used in this account in all thirty-nine times, and in every instance it is properly translated by our English word begat. Obviously in this instance begat is the correct translation. How odd it would sound, and how untrue, to say that "Abraham born Isaac"!

In I John 5:18 the Greek word **gennao** is used twice, and is translated both born and begotten. The text reads, "We know that whosoever is born of God [that is, by his Holy Spirit] sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." To be consistent the translators should have used the word begotten in both these instances. The only apparent reason for not doing so seems to have been a desire to make the phraseology of the translation less repetitious.

Begotten Now—Born in the Resurrection

If we consider the full value of the birth metaphor we are bound to reach the conclusion that in order to be born one must first be begotten. In other words, when a new life is to be brought into existence there must first be the begettal, then a period of gestation during which the embryo is nourished and developed, and thus prepared for birth in the due time. So is the work of the Holy Spirit presented to us in the Scriptures. When Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again," he was speaking of the completed work of the Holy Spirit in giving a new and

higher life to those who would devote themselves wholly to the doing of God's will. In the brief lesson to Nicodemus Jesus did not go into detail to show that before one is born of the Spirit he must first be begotten of the Spirit. However, elsewhere in the New Testament these details are clearly set forth.

In James 1:18 we read, "Of his [the Heavenly Father's] own will begat he us with the Word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." This is an important text, for not only does it show that a begetting takes place in the heart and mind of a Christian, but also that it is accomplished by God's will "with the Word of truth." In I Peter 1:23 we are given this same information. Here we read, "Being born [**gennao**, which should here be translated begotten] again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

How clearly this sets forth the thought of begetting, for reference is made to the "seed." In the natural process of procreation it is the begetting that is accomplished by the seed, not the birth; so Peter here refers to the beginning of the new life, not to its completion in birth. And the seed of begetting, he says, is "the Word of God." Here again we have a most revealing statement.

We have learned that every word of God in the Scriptures is Spirit-inspired. The Old Testament prophecies were written by holy men of old as they were "moved by the Holy Spirit." (II Pet. 1:21) All of Jesus' teachings are the direct result of the illumination of his mind and heart by the Holy Spirit. The same is true of the apostolic writings. When Jesus referred to the coming of the Holy Spirit he described it as "the Spirit of truth." (John 15:26; 16:13) It is clear, then, that to be begotten "by the Word of truth" means that one is begotten by the Holy Spirit.

This is an important fact, and to grasp it clearly will help to guard us against the notion that in some mysterious manner the Holy Spirit enters as a personality directly into the life of the believer, cleanses him from all sin, and makes it impossible that he should ever "fall from grace." It is this erroneous view that leads to the mistaken suggestion, "Once in grace, always in grace."

James and Peter give us the true thought. It is that through the Word of truth the beginning of a new life takes place in the mind and heart of a believer. But would not this mean that all who read the Word of God are begotten by the Holy Spirit? Not at all. Let us further consider the metaphor. All conditions must be right for the reception of the seed in order for begetting to take place. So it is in the case of Spirit begetting. Millions read the Word of God whose minds and hearts are not receptive to its life-giving truths; and while they may receive some comfort from its pages, and some instruction to help guide them in their daily tasks, they are not begotten to a new life.

Full Surrender

Full surrender to the divine will and to the holy impulses of God's Word is the condition necessary in order to be truly receptive to the begetting power of the Holy Spirit through the Word of truth. God's part in this wonderful arrangement whereby a few are to attain immortal life on the divine plane was the supplying of his Spirit-inspired Word, the seed. Unlike any previous exercise of his power, this aspect of his plan is accomplished by the power of his thoughts over the thoughts of the believer. And even with unlimited power at his command, the Creator will not invade the mind of another and begin the development of a new mind without the consent and invitation of the one involved.

Herein is reflected one of the most wonderful characteristics of our Heavenly Father. When the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters in connection with the original creation and preparation of the earth for human habitation, it was an arbitrary exercise of his power; but not so in the begetting of those who are to live and reign with Christ. He exercised his power to fill his Word with his thoughts which express his will concerning these, and assures them that all needed guidance and help will be given them to know and to do his will. And then he has waited—waited, that is, for the individuals whom his providences have brought into contact with his Word to voluntarily decide whether or not they will yield wholly and completely to his will as the Holy Spirit has expressed it through his Word.

In his precious Word God has caused his Spirit to record many, many wonderful promises of “glory and honor and immortality.” (Rom. 2:7) He has revealed that by these “exceeding great and precious promises” we can be made “partakers of the divine nature.” (II Pet. 1:4) The Holy Spirit inspired Jesus to say, “I go to prepare a place for you, and . . . I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”—John 14:2, 3

As we study the Word these promises come to our attention, and we think how wonderful they are. But at first we may rejoice even more in the glorious provision God has made for the world of mankind, which Peter describes as “restitution.” We are so happy for the realization that all God’s holy prophets since the world began foretold the “times of restitution of all things,” and at first perhaps we look forward to being a part of the “restitution class.”

We do not overlook the heavenly promises of the Bible, but we realize that to attain to the “high calling” requires surrender and sacrifice. We come to see through continued study of the Word that the way which leads to the heaven-

ly Canaan is a "narrow," difficult one. We hear Jesus say, "If any man will come after me [be my disciple], let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matt. 16:24) We read Paul's exhortation to present our bodies "a living sacrifice." These conditions of the "high calling" probably seem difficult at first, so we may think it is better just to keep on enjoying the truth of the divine plan and wait for the kingdom age when the "highway" to holiness and life will be opened, and then walk in that way to perfect and endless human life.—Isa. 35:8

But can one be entirely content with this decision? The great plan of God as revealed in his Word continues to increase our appreciation of its divine Architect. His love in giving his Son to be our Redeemer, and the Redeemer and Savior of the whole world, calls forth from us an increasing love for him. The love of Christ in suffering and dying that we might live reaches deeper and deeper into our hearts. Like Paul, we begin to reason that since Christ died for all, then we are all dead; and now that we can have life through his great sacrifice we really belong to him. This being true, then we should "not henceforth live unto ourselves" but unto him, and unto the loving Heavenly Father who sent him to be the Savior of the world.—II Cor. 5:15

Jesus said that no one can come unto him unless drawn by his Heavenly Father. (John 6:44) It is largely through his Word that the Father draws us to Christ. His wonderful love revealed through his plan begins to tug at our hearts, but at first perhaps we say, "All of self, and none of thee." However, this attitude soon gives place to, "Some of self and some of thee." But this does not allow the begetting power of the Word of truth to give us a hope of a new life. Nor can we be begotten of the Spirit through the Word when we have reached the measure of surrender in which we say to the Lord, "Less of self, and more of thee." Final-

ly, by the power of the truth reflecting as it does the great love of God, we reach the point of full surrender and with the poet pour out our hearts to God, saying,

“Lord, thy love at last has conquered:
None of self, and all of thee.”

By now, of course, we have learned that as members of a sinful and dying race we are not acceptable to God in our own merit, but only through the merit of the atoning blood of Christ. But with faith in this wonderful provision of divine grace, we present ourselves to God in full and unreserved consecration. We say to him that no longer do we want to do our will, but his, that henceforth we will endeavor to be fully controlled by the Spirit-inspired directives of his precious Word. Now all resistance to the influence of his thoughts over our lives is gone. His will has become the supreme rule of all our thoughts, words, and deeds.

Then we awaken to a marvelous realization! Having accepted the invitation to take up our cross and follow the Master, we know that all “the exceeding great and precious promises” of God to those who thus become the disciples of his beloved Son now belong to us. Jesus said to the rich young ruler that if he would give up all and follow him he would have treasure in heaven. (Matt. 19:21) The Master attached no provision to this assurance. He did not say that his Father would take the matter under advisement and possibly decide that the young man should be given treasure in heaven. If you follow me, this will be your reward, is the promise Jesus made to this young man who went to him asking how he might inherit eternal life.

So now with us, having complied with the Lord’s invitation to surrender ourselves to him, to be directed by his Spirit-inspired Word, we know that the promises of his Word to those who meet this condition apply to us. Those

inspiring promises of a heavenly home and of the divine nature, instead of being as they were before, something apart from us, viewed merely as an interesting feature of the divine plan, now become a life-giving influence in our lives! Through surrender to God, the seed begins at once to generate the hope of a new life. We are "begotten of God by the Word of truth."

Miracle of the New Life

Just as "only God can make a tree," so all life is a miracle, in that our finite minds cannot comprehend it. We witness the miracle of a newborn infant and we instinctively realize that actually the parents did not give life to that child. They simply complied with the conditions which God designed whereby the earth would eventually be filled with his human creatures. On a much higher level, this is true with respect to those who are "begotten of God by the Word of truth." It is among God's greatest miracles, in which it is our blessed privilege to co-operate.

Some miracles are accomplished almost instantaneously; others over a long period of time. When Jesus called to the dead brother of Martha and Mary, "Lazarus, come forth," and he who was dead "came forth," it was a miracle performed in a short time. But the miracle of the creation as displayed throughout the universe involved long epochs of time for accomplishment. The miracle of Spirit-begetting and birth is also spread out over a long period of time.

Think of the time consumed in preparing the seed of begetting; that is, the Word of God. God's Spirit miraculously guided the writing of the Bible. Thousands of years were involved in thus recording the thoughts of God in a manner in which they could enter the human mind and heart, be pondered over, and accepted or rejected at the option of the reader. God could directly fill the mind of anyone with his thoughts, but how would he know that they came

from God? Besides, how disconcerting it would be for one to discover that his mind was being filled with ideas in other than the normal manner! But how wise are God's ways! The miracle-working power of God is operative in shaping the circumstances of one's life in preparation for entrance into the mind of the seed of begettal. How many have testified of experiences in life by which they have been prostrated and caused to long for an answer to the many questions which have arisen from their difficult problems of life. No one who is thoroughly satisfied with his lot in life is likely to pay any serious attention to the Word of God, especially those portions of the Word which speak of sacrifice and suffering as the disciples of Christ.

It is only when one realizes his need of help from God that he is likely to give consideration to the Word of God. And God, in his infinite wisdom, and in the tenderness of his love, knows exactly the sort of experiences which will most effectively touch the heart of those whom he desires to call, that the called one might give heed to his Word. Yes, this work of preparing for Spirit begettal is miraculous, even as the preparation of the seed of begettal was by the Spirit of God. Every aspect of God's part in this feature of his plan was and is miraculous.

It remains only for us to yield our minds to the influence of the Spirit, and accept the will of God as revealed through his Word. There can be no Spirit-begetting when one does not yield to the will of God. And, on the other hand, in the case of those who have been made receptive by circumstances of life which have been overruled by God for this purpose and, having studied the Word and voluntarily surrendered to the will of God as expressed therein, Spirit begetting would follow. All who are thus dealt with by God may claim the promises of "glory and honor and immortality," in the certain knowledge that if

they continue faithful to the Lord they will receive "the crown of life."—Rev. 2:10

In keeping with the figure of begetting and birth, the Scriptures reveal that the embryo new life develops, and that this also is accomplished by the Spirit of God. The spiritual growth, if pleasing to God, must be in conformity to the divine image. Thus the Spirit of God promotes growth of the Christian fruitage of peace, joy, long-suffering, and love. (Gal. 5:22; II Pet. 1:5-7) Paul gives us a beautiful description of this work of the Holy Spirit, saying, "Be renewed in the spirit of your minds; . . . put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."—Eph. 4:23, 24

When the new life is developed to the point where it is ready for birth, our corruptible bodies go into death, and the birth of the new life is accomplished by means of the resurrection. Here the Spirit or power of God is further exercised. Paul speaks of this mighty power which was used to raise Jesus from the dead, or, to use the symbol we are discussing, to bring about his birth of the Spirit. He speaks of "the exceeding greatness of his [God's] power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."—Eph. 1:19, 20

In speaking to Nicodemus, Jesus used the wind to help illustrate some of the characteristics of those who are born of the Spirit. The wind is both invisible and powerful. So will all those be who, having first of all been begotten by the Spirit through the Word of truth, and who, by feeding upon the Word, continue to develop until they are made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." (Col. 1:12) Divine power will exalt these to heavenly life. They will be given "celestial" or heavenly bodies; and

if they have been overcomers they will “live and reign with Christ a thousand years.”—Rev. 5:10; 20:4; 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21

Not all of the adamic race who will be saved through the blood of Christ will thus be “born again.” Jesus did not say to Nicodemus that it is necessary to be born again in order to be saved. What he said was that one had to be born again in order to see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3) The reference is, therefore, to those who will be associated with Jesus as rulers in the long-promised kingdom. In any kingdom or government there are the rulers and the subjects. Jesus and his true disciples of the present age will be the rulers in the kingdom of God. These will then have been “born again.” Jesus was the first to experience this great change of life from human to spirit. His disciples, his true church, experience this new birth in “the first resurrection” at the end of the age. Then God’s promises of restitution life, which is restored human life, will flow out to all the families of the earth.—John 3:14-16

CHAPTER VI

The Witness of the Spirit

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

—Romans 8:16, 17

THE "witness" of the Spirit is vitally important to every disciple of Christ, for the Spirit witnesses that we are "the children of God." Nothing could be more important than to be assured of sonship; that God has accepted and begotten us through his Word to be one of his reigning house of sons, one of his heirs, and a joint-heir with Christ. Strange to say, though, many who love the Lord and sincerely desire to serve and please him are often in doubt as to whether or not they have the divine approval. These doubts are expressed in the lines:

" 'Tis a point I long to know, oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord, or no, am I his, or am I not?"

There is really no occasion for these doubts ever arising in the mind of one who is wholly devoted to the Lord for, as Paul says, the "Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Probably the doubts which do arise are due to a misunderstanding of the manner in which the Holy Spirit witnesses to the Lord's people concerning their sonship. The Spirit's witness is not a mat-

ter of feelings. Every consecrated child of God will have days of joy and days of sorrow. One's physical condition, as well as the circumstances of life, has much to do with "feelings," so they are most unreliable as a test of our relationship with the Heavenly Father.

The witness of the Holy Spirit reaches us through the Word of truth, that Spirit-inspired Word which outlines all the terms and conditions of the "narrow way" of sacrifice, and reveals the sort of experiences the faithful followers of Jesus should expect. If we find that we are having the experiences which the Holy Spirit, through the written Word, has testified will come to all the children of God during the present age, then we can be assured of our standing before the Lord and know that we are his children.

First of all, however, it is essential that we examine ourselves to make sure that we have taken the proper steps in order to have the Lord accept and bless us. Have we repented of our sin, and through faith in Christ presented ourselves in full consecration to do God's will? If we have, then a very important witness of the Spirit is already ours.

Jesus said that no one could come to him unless drawn by the Father. (John 6:44) If we have been drawn to Christ we can, therefore, be assured that it was through the drawing power of the Heavenly Father. This means that the Heavenly Father desired that we become his children. And then Jesus, speaking further under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said that he would not cast out those who came to him. (John 6:37) Thus the Spirit witnesses that the Heavenly Father wanted us, and that Jesus accepted us; that is, if we have truly surrendered ourselves to do the divine will.

"If So Be"

In our text Paul states that the Holy Spirit witnesses that we are the children of God "if so be that we suffer with

him (Christ), that we may be also glorified together." This implies clearly that if we are not suffering with Christ, then the Holy Spirit is not witnessing to us that we are the children of God. Why is Paul so emphatic on this point? It would seem that he based this statement on a great truth set forth by the Apostle Peter. Whether he learned it from Peter or by direct revelation from God as to the meaning of the Old Testament Scriptures is not important. Peter expressed it this way: he said that the Spirit of God in the prophets of the Old Testament testified concerning "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."—I Pet. 1:11

Yes, the Holy Spirit testified in advance concerning the "sufferings of Christ." In the following verse Peter further explains that the prophets did not minister to themselves, but to "us" of the Gospel age. In other words, the testimony of the Spirit concerning the sufferings of Christ was intended to outline the way in which we should walk and the experiences we should expect to have as the disciples of Christ. If we are walking in that way, and having the experiences foretold through the prophets by the Holy Spirit, then the Spirit is witnessing to us that we are in God's favor and are therefore his children.

The force of this presentation by Paul and Peter is largely lost unless we recognize that the true disciples of Jesus are a part of The Christ; that if we have been baptized into Christ, and have come under the baptism of the Spirit, it means that we are members of the "body" of Christ. If, then, we are a part of the "body" of Christ, the Spirit's testimony concerning the "sufferings of Christ" applies to us as well as it did to Jesus. How plain it is, then, that if we are suffering with Christ, the Spirit is witnessing to us concerning our position in the "body" of Christ, and that we have, through "begetting," received the Spirit of sonship! If we are not suffering with Christ, the opposite is

true. It means that we have not taken the necessary steps of repentance and consecration, or else have become lax in our devotion so that we are more pleasing to the world than to the Lord.

The strength of this witness of the Spirit concerning our share in the sufferings of Christ is often lost through a wrong conception of what is meant by suffering with Christ. We think of the cruelties which were heaped upon Jesus, leading finally to his being nailed to a cross until he died. We think of the bitter experiences of Peter and Paul, and others in the Early Church. We compare these examples of suffering with the more or less tranquil lives which the Lord's people lead today and wonder, perhaps, whether or not we are doing very much suffering with Christ.

We believe that the answer to this problem lies in the fact that suffering does not always have to be of a physical nature. If the truth were known, we would probably find that only a small minority of the Gospel-age sons of God have had physical cruelties inflicted upon them. Jesus was despised and hated by the religious rulers of his time almost from the first day of his ministry, but they did not inflict bodily suffering upon him until the last twenty-four hours of his earthly life.

Up until the final day of Jesus' ministry any physical suffering he experienced was self-imposed, in that he gave of his strength, his vitality, as he went about doing good. Herein we have one of the most vital and important aspects of his loving example to us. We should not become concerned as to whether or not we are suffering with Christ. If we have plunged wholeheartedly into his service, and are so selfless in going about doing good, we will feel at least some twinges of painful fatigue, some loss of vitality as a direct result of our membership in the "body" of Christ, and this is suffering with him.

No, suffering with Christ does not always involve persecution by enemies of the cross. We have a notable example of this brought to our attention by the Apostle Paul in Philippians 2:25-30. The facts are these: Paul was in prison in Rome. He was greatly loved by the brethren in Philippi. To express their love, and to render a service to him, they sent one of their number, Epaphroditus, to visit Paul and to take him a gift, perhaps of clothing, or of food—the record does not indicate. It was a difficult undertaking. Epaphroditus became ill, very ill, “nigh unto death.” Paul explains that it “was for the work of Christ” this zealous brother was “nigh unto death, not regarding his life.”

Epaphroditus surely had the witness of the Holy Spirit, for he partook of the sufferings of Christ. He was not made a prisoner in Rome. So far as we know, the enemies of Christ did not inflict suffering upon him. But by his own intrepid zeal to serve a beloved brother in Christ, which lifted him above regarding his own life, he almost died. Paul did not caution Epaphroditus to be less zealous in the future, and to take better care of himself. No, he commended him to the brethren in Philippi, to “receive him . . . in the Lord with all gladness,” and to “hold such in reputation.”—Phil. 2:29

Opportunities comparable to the one enjoyed by Epaphroditus do not come to many of the Lord's people, but we can all profit by his example of faithfulness. How are we facing up to the opportunities of service that, in the Lord's providence, are presented to us? Are we backing away from sacrifice when the only reason is that it appears to be too difficult, or too costly in terms of weariness or loss of earthly comforts and ease? If laying down our lives for the brethren, as Epaphroditus was doing in taking a gift to Paul, is suffering with Christ, let us not be concerned as to whether or not we have this witness of the Spirit. Let us, rather, bestir ourselves to greater diligence in

manifesting our love for the Lord and for his people to the point where we will realize that it is really costing us something.

Heart Suffering

Physical suffering is not always the most difficult to bear. We knew a brother who, from a certain ailment, suffered physical pain almost constantly. This brother's family were not Christians, and were very much opposed to him, ridiculing him on occasion, and making the atmosphere of the home very uncongenial for him. He testified that his physical suffering was as nothing compared with the heart pangs that were inflicted upon him by his family. This brother was suffering with Christ even though he was not imprisoned, not burned at the stake, and not thrown to the lions, nor crucified.

Many times, as Jesus foretold, the Christian's foes are principally those of his own household. The truth turns one member of the family against another. This causes suffering where it hurts most. Yet those who are loyal to the Lord and to the truth will not permit even those who are dearest to them according to the ties of the flesh to turn them aside from loyalty to the Lord and to their vows of consecration. Because of their faithfulness under such adverse circumstances they surely are suffering with Christ, and therefore have this witness of the Spirit that they are the children of God.

Separate from the World

Another witness, or testimony of the Holy Spirit that we are the "children of God" is found in John 15:19. Jesus said, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." There are few indeed of the human race who do not esteem the good will and friendship of others. However

small or large our "world" may be, it is natural to desire its approbation. People like to be thought of as accomplished and important. This is the normal viewpoint of the world. It is not in itself sinful, except as fraud and deceit are employed in order to gain a high position in the eyes of others.

But when we accept the truth and faithfully bear witness to it within the circle of our acquaintances, our "world" begins to lose esteem for us. Not that our friends distrust us. They may even admit that our ethical standards are higher than before. What they do not like is our religion, and we find that more and more they hold aloof from us. Depending on how deeply we were entrenched in the ways of the world, this estrangement will "hurt." This, however, we can, and should, accept as part of the Spirit's witness. It is a part of our suffering with Christ.

The enmity of the world may not lead to physical persecution, especially in the "free" world. In some countries, however, loyalty to the truth still leads to imprisonment and other forms of physical punishment. Our love for the Lord and for the truth should be so great that we would not hesitate to let our light shine regardless of what the consequences may be in terms of mental or physical suffering. Our overcoming the world consists in our refusing to permit the selfish spirit of the world, even its jeers and threats, to stand in the way of our full loyalty to the Lord. If this is our attitude, then we have a further witness of the Spirit that we are the children of God, for John wrote, "Whosoever is born [begotten] of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."—I John 5:4

Will Not Wilfully Sin

John mentions another witness of the Spirit to confirm that we are among the Spirit-begotten children of God. He

writes, "Whosoever is born [begotten] of God sinneth not." (I John 5:18) As new creatures we still have a body of flesh, and a very imperfect body it is. John did not mean that our new minds would always be able to control the flesh and make it live up to the perfect standard of righteousness which the Lord sets before us in his Word. But the new mind will not consent to sin, and when through weakness of the flesh a sin is committed, we "have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous."—I John 2:1

John writes further on this point, saying, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (I John 1:8, 9) This explanation is no excuse for relaxing our efforts to keep the body "under." (I Cor. 9:27) It does mean, however, that if at heart we find that we are thoroughly out of harmony with all unrighteousness, we can claim the witness of the Spirit which John mentions; namely, that those who are begotten as the children of God do not wilfully sin. Thus we have this further proof that we are the children of God.

Abounding in Grace

Peter wrote, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." (II Pet. 1:4) It is the Spirit-begotten children of God to whom these "exceeding great and precious promises" belong. But in order to attain the "divine nature" we must develop as new creatures. Peter outlines what is involved in this, saying that we should give diligence to add to our faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance (self-control), patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, and love.

Peter further explains that if these evidences of spiritual growth are in us and "abound," we will "neither be barren

nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”—II Pet. 1:5-11

Whether we have been the Lord’s disciples for only a short time or for many years, can we, upon looking back over the way see some evidence of growth in the spiritual graces? Have we become better acquainted with the Lord through the precious truth of his Word, and thus increased in knowledge? Are we more patient, more kind, more self-sacrificing in our service for others? Are these evidences of the Spirit’s power within us “abounding,” in the sense that holy things of the Lord are the most important consideration of our consecrated lives? If so, then we have this as another testimony that we are the children of God, members of his royal house of sons who are to live and reign with Christ in his kingdom; and as Peter affirms, we will have an “abundant” entrance into that kingdom.

Led by the Spirit

Paul wrote, “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” (Rom. 8:14) Are we being “led” by the Holy Spirit of truth? If so, then we have an additional witness that we are the “children of God.” What does Paul mean by being “led” by the Spirit? This is a most important consideration. Again let us emphasize that God’s Holy Spirit does not lead us by “impressions” or “feelings.” The leadings of the Spirit are by means of the Spirit-inspired directives of the written Word.

We have in Jesus a perfect example of a Spirit-led life, for he followed exactly the instructions contained for him

in the "volume of the book"; that is, the Old Testament Scriptures, and these same instructions are for our guidance. If ever in doubt as to how the Spirit might lead in certain circumstances, we need but ask what Jesus would have done under similar situations. Of course, we will not find in his experiences a criterion for every detail of our lives, because he could do what we cannot, but the principles which he followed should, and do, constitute a wonderfully accurate guide for all who are endeavoring to walk in his steps.

Primarily, the Spirit led Jesus in the way of sacrifice—a sacrifice so all-consuming and complete that it ended in death. Through the Prophet Isaiah, the Spirit testified that Jesus would be "brought as a lamb to the slaughter." (Isa. 53:7) And he was "brought," not by the religious rulers of his time, not by Roman soldiers, but by the "Spirit of God." We, too, are being similarly led by the Spirit. "As it is written," Paul testified, concerning one of the Spirit-appointed instructions found in "the volume of the book," "For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."—Rom. 8:36

The slain lamb symbolism epitomizes one of the results of the Spirit's leadings in Jesus' life. It led him to death. In Revelation 14:1 we find the "Lamb" on Mount Sion, and "with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads." These, in other words, are the "children of God" who had been led by his Holy Spirit. And verse 4 informs us that these followed the Lamb "whithersoever he goeth." As Jesus was led by the Spirit, so these were led by the Spirit. As we have seen, the Spirit led Jesus into death, and even so it leads all who truly walk in his steps. There is no way to continue being the sons of God except by thus being led by the Spirit of God.

Here, then, is another important testimony of the Holy Spirit to assure us of our sonship. Are we allowing the Spirit of the truth, through the written Word, to lead us in the way of self-sacrifice, contrary to the desires of the flesh, and in opposition to the spirit of the world? It is not a complex question to answer. However, if for any reason we have been resisting the Spirit's leadings, the decision to change our ways and live up to our consecration vows may be a difficult one. But it is an important decision, and blessed are all they whose hearts are responding in loyal obedience to the leadings of God's Holy Spirit, for it means that they are indeed "the children of God."

Divine Providences

The providences of God, under the direction of his Holy Spirit, supplement the directives of the written Word. But we have the responsibility of interpreting his providences correctly. They should never be given meanings contrary to the testimony of the written Word. God's Word points out a certain definite course for all the consecrated to follow. It includes the development of the Christian graces, associating with the Lord's people whenever possible, bearing witness to the truth, and laying down our lives for the brethren. The providences of God should never be interpreted contrary to this general course.

For example, we might make an effort to bear witness to the truth and obtain no results. As far as we can determine all the "seed" which we "sowed" fell by the "way-side." We might be inclined to interpret this as meaning that the harvest "work" is all done; that the Lord does not want us to continue bearing witness to the truth, otherwise he would bless our efforts. But this would be wrong, because it would be contrary to the written Word. The Lord has made it plain that he wants his people to continue to proclaim the truth as long as they possibly can. Nothing is

said in the Bible about ceasing to bear witness to the truth when it appears there are few or no results.

The proper way to interpret such an experience would be to conclude that perhaps the Lord wants us to examine our methods of witnessing, or our motive in serving him. Often the Lord withholds the "increase" until our hearts are right before him. The Lord may withhold his blessing from the witness work of an ecclesia until the spiritual health of the ecclesia is better. There are many possible reasons why the Lord might not bless our efforts to witness for the truth, but never does the lack of results mean that he does not want us to try again. So if our love for the Lord is so great that we find ourselves interpreting our experiences in full harmony with his written Word, determined to continue in the way he has directed, regardless of the difficulties and discouragements which may be involved, then we have a further testimony of the Spirit that we are the "children of God."

Scriptural Examples

Interesting and revealing examples of the leadings of God's providences are given us in the Book of Acts, which records much of the activity of the Early Church. In those apostolic days, of course, the "gifts" of the Spirit were operative, and in many instances the believers were blessed with miraculous demonstrations of the Holy Spirit's leadings in their experiences. Even so, the principles involved in those leadings are the same today as they were then.

In Acts 8:29 we read, "The Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." This was the "chariot" in which the Ethiopian eunuch was riding, and reading the prophecy of Isaiah. Previously Philip had been directed to go into the territory where the Lord knew this eunuch would be traveling: "The angel of the Lord spake

unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert."—vs. 26

Just how the Holy Spirit directed Philip to approach the chariot and engage the eunuch in conversation the account does not indicate, nor is this important for us to know. The point is that circumstances were shaped in a manner to direct him to an opportunity of service. Philip knew he had been anointed to proclaim the glad tidings, and he interpreted circumstances bearing upon his life from this standpoint. He knew that the Holy Spirit of truth would not lead him contrary to the Word of truth.

By means of the Spirit, or power of God, there was a miraculous shaping of circumstances in connection with the conversion of Cornelius, the first Gentile accepted in the "body" of Christ. Cornelius himself was given a vision in which an angel of the Lord spoke to him; and Peter had that remarkable dream in which he saw a sheet let down from heaven filled with unclean animals. This was on the roof of Simón the tanner's house. When Peter awoke from his dream, "the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee."—Acts 10:19

These "three men" had been sent by Cornelius to seek Peter, as the angel of the Lord had directed. Again, we do not know how the Spirit informed Peter about the three men. Since it was in the days of miracles, perhaps an angel spoke to him, as an angel had spoken to Cornelius. The main point is that the Spirit, or power of God, directed in connection with another aspect of the divine plan—not contrary to it. The time had come for the Gospel to go to the Gentiles. There was service to be rendered in connection with it, and the Spirit of God directed in harmony therewith.

We read in Acts 16:6 that Paul and Timothy were "forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia."

Taken by itself this statement might indicate that at times the Holy Spirit leads God's people away from service, but the context reveals otherwise. Here is a case where another field of service was opening—Macedonia. Circumstances were such as to hinder the ministry in Asia so that Paul and Timothy would be alerted to the call to "come over into Macedonia, and help us." (vs. 9) Sometimes the Lord's people have to decide as to where and how they will serve, and should watch carefully for the leadings of the Holy Spirit in all such cases, but never should our experiences be interpreted to mean that the Lord wants us to give up bearing witness to the truth. So, if we are following the Spirit's leadings in keeping with the commission, "Ye are the light of the world," then we bear this witness that we are the "children of God."

The Joy of the Lord

Not all of the Spirit's witnessing is related to sacrifice and suffering. This was not the case with Jesus, nor will it be with us if we are enjoying the fulness of divine favor. In the "volume of the book" it is written prophetically of Jesus, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." (Ps. 16:5,6) The "lines" here mentioned were those used to mark out a piece of land, or a field, for one who had inherited it. So, symbolically, Jesus received a "goodly heritage"; the "lines" had fallen for him in "pleasant places."

There was a wonderful future joy set before Jesus which enabled him to endure the cross, and despise the shame that was heaped upon him. (Heb. 12:2) He knew that in his Father's actual presence there would be "fulness of joy." (Ps. 16:11) But, in addition to this, Jesus possessed a great inward peace and joy of heart even while he was laying down his life as the world's Redeemer. This

“joy” of the Lord was his strength. It stemmed from his full confidence in the victorious outcome of every feature of his Father’s plan for the redemption and recovery of the fallen race from sin and death.

Toward the close of his ministry Jesus bequeathed this peace and joy to his disciples. He said, “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” (John 15: 10, 11) Are we keeping the Lord’s commandments, and are we experiencing the joy which Jesus said would be ours as a result? If so, then we have this most reassuring witness of the Spirit that we are abiding in Jesus’ love and in the love of our Heavenly Father.

Jesus bequeathed to his disciples another blessed portion of the inheritance he enjoyed while laying down his life as the world’s Redeemer. He said to them, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27) This is the “peace of God” which passeth all human comprehension, yet it is ours to enjoy if our faith can only lay hold firmly upon the promises of God.

Are we enjoying this peace? Daily there are situations in life which tend to distract, and to fill the heart with anxious forebodings. The world around us is disturbed and fearful, and their fears can easily become ours unless we keep in mind the precious promises of God, our Heavenly Father, who is almighty in his power to help, too wise to err, and too good to be unkind. God knows the outcome of his plan, and Jesus had full confidence in it. That is why Jesus had the peace of God. If we have the same confidence, we will have the same peace, for we will know that

God's design for us, and his plan for the world, will triumph gloriously. Do we have this peace of God? If so, it is another "witness" that we are "the children of God."

Truly the present inheritance of the Spirit-begotten children of God is a blessed and a rich one! As with Jesus, so with us, we can testify that our "lines are fallen unto us in pleasant places." And the rejoicing in the Lord which is our happy lot while still in the flesh will expand into "fulness of joy" as it did with Jesus when, being faithful unto death, we enter into the promised "glory to follow" and become associate kings and priests with Jesus for the blessing of all mankind with health and life.

CHAPTER VII

Sealed by the Holy Spirit

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. —Ephesians 4:30

THE Greek word in our text translated “sealed” means preserved; also attested. In ancient times a signet ring, or stamp, was used to seal important documents. This is still done today. A letter is sealed to secure secrecy for its contents. Contracts are sealed, or attested, to guarantee the fulfilment of what is agreed upon.

In Ephesians 1:13 and 14 Paul speaks of the believer as being “sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.” The believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit as a kind of “down payment” to guarantee his ultimate gaining of the full inheritance. Here again we are familiar with the illustration, for it is still customary in transacting business to make down payments to secure and attest to agreements until they are fully consummated. In Romans 8:23 this down payment is referred to as “the firstfruits of the Spirit.”

In Acts 20:28 Paul speaks of “the church of God” which has been “purchased” by the blood of Christ. The church, then (those who have been called out from the world and have come under the baptism of the Holy Spirit), constitutes “the purchased possession” awaiting deliverance in

“the first resurrection,” and “the Holy Spirit of promise” is given to them as a down payment, a surety, that the full inheritance will eventually be received. And it is a wonderful inheritance, “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power [Spirit] of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”—I Pet. 1:4, 5

The glorious inheritance of the “new creation” will be entered into only by those who have been sealed by the Holy Spirit, or, as Peter otherwise explains it, “kept,” or secured, “by the power of God.” And, as Peter says, this keeping power of the Holy Spirit is effective only in the lives of those who exercise faith. God does not arbitrarily preserve his saints and usher them triumphantly into the kingdom. They must exercise faith in his promises, and conform their lives to the conditions attached to those promises if they are to benefit from the sealing power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul says that we are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit upon his disciples, and at Pentecost it was “shed forth” on those assembled in the upper room. These represented the entire church which, by the Holy Spirit, has been “baptized” and “anointed.” Individually, the Holy Spirit of truth has also begotten the Lord’s consecrated people to a new hope of life, and—through ways indicated in and by the written Word—witnesses to them that they are the children of God. Surely, then, the baptism, anointing, begetting, and witness of the Holy Spirit constitute a very substantial down payment on the inheritance which has been promised.

Also, we believe it is proper to think of the expression, “Holy Spirit of promise,” which seals the Spirit-begotten children of God, as indicative of what we know to be a fact; namely, that by his Spirit God caused to be recorded

in his written Word scores of promises by which he guarantees that, if we yield to the molding influences of his Spirit and obey its directives, we shall be given strength for our every time of need, and that "an entrance shall be ministered unto . . . [us] abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (II Pet. 1:11) What more could the Lord do to attest our victory in Christ than to reiterate his promises of grace sufficient and overcoming strength! We know that his promises are sure, so can say with Paul, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."—I Cor. 15:57

Imperfections Covered

We know that in our flesh dwelleth no good thing; that in the merit of our own righteousness we could never hope to attain that glorious "inheritance" which is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." But God, in his great love, has made provision to cover our imperfections with the robe of Christ's righteousness. Because of this we have his assurance, his promise, that he is not dealing with us according to our imperfections, but according to the desire of our hearts. This assurance alone should do much to seal or guarantee our hope of the heavenly inheritance. "If we confess our sins," John wrote, "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."—I John 1:9

This does not mean that we can in any measure become lax in our endeavors to keep the fallen flesh under control. To do so would be to "grieve" the Holy Spirit; that is, go contrary to what its influence should be accomplishing in our lives. The context in which our text is found indicates this. We quote, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are

sealed unto the day of redemption [deliverance]. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."—Eph. 4:29-32

Thank God that through Christ he has forgiven us, which means that our fleshly imperfections need not stand in the way of our inheriting the kingdom. But this means that we also should forgive others, and not exercise bitterness and malice toward them. If we harbor bitterness in our hearts toward others, or allow the imperfections of the flesh to influence us in any way, we "grieve" the Spirit; that is, we resist its molding influence in our lives. It is God, by the "Holy Spirit of promise," who does the sealing, but we can resist the sealing process by not conforming fully to his will.

Diversified Promises

The promises of God, recorded in his Word under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in a general way cover every possible situation in our consecrated lives. This is why the sealing by the Holy Spirit of promise is so complete, so all-comprehensive. For example, as a rule the Lord's people realize their lack of wisdom in dealing with the daily problems of the Christian life. But through the Apostle James the Lord has promised, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." (James 1:5) How understandingly has the Holy Spirit of promise given us this assurance—"and upbraideth not." Let us never hesitate to ask God for the things which he has promised, for he will always understand. God will never upbraid us for taking him at his word.

The foes of the "new creation" are many and powerful. Well might we tremble with fear when we think how weak

we are, and how utterly incapable of fighting victoriously against the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Were it not for the promises of God we would have no hope whatever of attaining the heavenly inheritance. But God has given us the assurance of his protection and care. In Psalm 91 the Holy Spirit of promise has clearly attested to the Lord's ability to protect his people, and to show them his "salvation." We quote some of these sealing promises:

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler."—vss. 1-4

"A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee."—vs. 7

"There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling."—vs. 10

"He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation."—vss. 15, 16

How wonderfully these precious promises guarantee help and protection under all circumstances, assuring deliverance from "the snare of the fowler"! It is only if we dwell—remain, that is—"in the secret place of the most High" that we can have his protection, under the "shadow" of the Almighty. None of the sealing promises of God are unconditional. In every instance it is our obligation to conform to the conditions attached to them—to yield, as it were, to the imprint of the divine "stamp." To be sealed with the Holy Spirit does not imply the erroneous view, "once in grace, always in grace."

Being sealed by the Spirit does not imply perfection of character development, or full control over the weaknesses of the flesh. Paul says that we who “have the firstfruits [the down payment] of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption [deliverance] of our body [the “body of Christ”]. (Rom. 8:23) But despite our weaknesses and imperfections we have the assurance that “it is God that justifieth.” (Rom. 8:33) Satan will endeavor to discourage us, and others may condemn. But God has drawn us to Christ, and has given us the hope of that glorious inheritance which is reserved in heaven for us. Christ, we know, died for us, and is risen again, and is now “at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” (Rom. 8:34) In view of this, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”—Rom. 8:35

Paul’s answer to his own question as to whether any of these difficulties, these hardships, will separate us from divine love, and cause us the loss of our inheritance, is most reassuring, a seal indeed to assure us of final victory. He wrote, “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us: for I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”—Rom. 8:37-39

Will Finish the Work

Another sealing text of Scripture is Philippians 1:6. Here the Apostle Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says to the Brethren at Philippi, and to us, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform [margin, ‘finish’] it until the day of Jesus Christ.” The strength of this seal is in the un-

changeableness of our God. It was God who began the good work of grace in our hearts. He drew us to Christ, through whom we are justified. He inspired us by his promises even of the divine nature. (II Pet. 1:4) He encourages us to set our affections on things above. He has made us heirs of himself, and joint-heirs of Christ. And now he will not change. We know that he wants us to enter into our inheritance; so, like Paul, we too can be confident that the Lord will finish his work of grace in our hearts, and that eventually we will hear his "Well done."

But in this again there is the necessity of our continuing to co-operate with our Heavenly Father. We are to work out our own salvation, even though God is working in us "to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. 2:12, 13) It is God's good pleasure that we shall have an inheritance with Jesus in the rulership of his kingdom. Jesus said so. (Luke 12:32) It is to this that we have been called. It is for this that we have been, to use Paul's language, "apprehended of Christ Jesus."

Paul explains that for himself he did not then consider that he had apprehended, or finished working out his own salvation. (Phil. 3:12, 13) "Not as though I had already attained," he says, "either were already perfect: but I follow after"; that is, I continue on in co-operation with God who is working in me to will and to do of his good pleasure. "This one thing I do," Paul said, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Our own part in this arrangement must be the "one thing," the all-important, all-consuming thing in our lives. If it is, and continues to be, we can have full assurance of faith that God will finish his work in us, that we will be made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."—Col. 1:12

Progress Essential

The sealing promises of God apply to his Spirit-begotten children from the beginning of their walk in the narrow way. He drew them, called them, and through the Holy Spirit of truth, begat them to be his children. Even as "babes in Christ" it is God's pleasure that they receive the inheritance which he has promised, that through his strength they may apprehend that for which they have been apprehended by him. (Phil. 3:12) But his wonderful assurances of conquering grace and strength become increasingly reassuring to us as we endure patiently the experiences which his wisdom permits to mold us more and more into the image of his dear Son.

This thought is brought out beautifully by the Apostle Paul in Romans 5:1-5. "Being justified by faith," Paul says, "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Through Christ also we "have access by faith into this [further] grace wherein we stand," a grace so boundless, so marvelous, that now we "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." What a rich inheritance—"the glory of God"! It is the divine nature, and the divine glory. Jesus said, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."—Rev. 3:21

But there are conditions: we must be tested and found worthy. Paul explains this, saying, "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience [Greek, 'test' or 'proof']; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." (Rom. 5:3-5) The key to this passage is in the meaning of the Greek word mistranslated "experience." Its literal meaning is "test." It is this word that Paul uses in II Corinthians 2:9, which reads, "To this end also did I write, that I might

know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things."

So, after begetting us by the Holy Spirit of truth, and engendering in our hearts the hope of partaking of his glory, the Lord permits tribulation. If we patiently endure the trials which his love and wisdom allow as a test of our obedience, it proves our standing before him, and strengthens our hope. Indeed, it is then, Paul says, that we have a "hope which maketh not ashamed: because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us."

From the very beginning of our Spirit-begotten life we have a glorious hope, the "hope of the glory of God." By God's grace that hope is maintained throughout our entire Christian way. And when, through the Lord's help, we patiently endure the tests which he permits, this hope becomes one of which we will not be ashamed. In the Greek text the thought is that we will not be "disgraced." When one starts out to accomplish a certain undertaking and by his own negligence fails, he is disgraced in the eyes of others. We can be sure that God will always do his part on our behalf, working in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. The question is, Will we do ours? In this text Paul is speaking of those who have endured patiently and have thus demonstrated, up to a point at least, that they will continue to be faithful. His assurance is that these now have an abiding hope because they will not be disgraced through failure of their own.

Then Paul takes us a step further into this tested relationship with God. We will not be "ashamed" of our hope, he says, "because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." It was through the written Word that the Holy Spirit began to shed the love of God abroad in our hearts from the time we first became new creatures in Christ Jesus. Yes, even

before this the Word revealed God's love to us, and it was his love that drew us to him, and prompted us to surrender our wills to him and devote all we have and are to his service.

John wrote, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." (I John 3:1) This full "manner" of the Father's love continues to be an increasing power in our lives, inducing sacrificial obedience, and helping us patiently to endure the "tribulation" by which we are tested. Even these trials are evidences of God's love, for "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." (Heb. 12:6) Thus daily, through his Word and providences, God's Holy Spirit continues to shed divine love abroad in our hearts. It become an increasing power to sustain and help, and we become overwhelmed with the determination to make our "calling and election sure." In this wonderful manner, then, the sealing power of the Holy Spirit continues to work, causing its imprint to sink deeper and deeper into the hearts of those who are being molded into the likeness of Christ.

This increasing ability of the believer to receive the imprint of the Holy Spirit's seal is seen in the experience of the Apostle Paul. As we have noted, when he wrote to the brethren at Philippi he acknowledged that he had not yet "apprehended that for which he had been apprehended by Christ. (Phil. 3:12, 13) Up to this time Paul had endured much, and under most difficult circumstances had demonstrated his loyalty to God and to the messianic cause. He had in no way been unfaithful, and he enjoyed the smile of his Heavenly Father's approval. But would this continue to be the case?

Paul indicates that he was reasonably sure of being released from the Roman prison in which he wrote the letter. If this were true, he knew that there were many trials and tests ahead. He knew that he could depend upon God to

help him, yet in his humility he felt that it was too soon to claim that he had proved faithful. Later, during his second imprisonment, and when he knew that soon he would be executed, he was in a position to take a different view. Doubtless even at this late date, the apostle could have renounced his Lord, saved his life and gone free. But he did not do this; he had met this final test. Deep in his own heart he was still willing to die in the Master's service. His actual execution would now be but a detail, a formality.

In Paul's own mind and heart he had already been faithful unto death, and by faith he now knew that he would receive the crown of life. So no longer did he say, "I count not myself to have apprehended," but instead, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."—II Tim. 4:7, 8

"And not to me only." This Spirit-directed statement by Paul is another of the sealing promises. Because Paul had fought a good fight, because he had faithfully finished his course and kept the faith, he knew he would receive the promised crown of life. He knew this because the Holy Spirit of truth had revealed it to him, and had assured him that the Lord was a righteous Judge, a Judge that would not fail to fulfil all his good promises. And these reassuring facts which Paul sets forth apply not to him only, but to all who continue to put their trust in the Lord.

Concerning God's faithfulness there can be no doubt. Paul wrote of him as the One "who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." (I Cor. 1:8, 9) And again, "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."—I Thess. 5:24

Will we be faithful? Every test through which, by God's grace, we successfully pass, increases our confidence of final victory; for we are confident that he who loved and helped us in the past will continue to do so. We expect that the trials will continue to the end of the way, but we know that because God is faithful he will not permit us to be tempted or tried "above that ye are able to bear," and if and when the difficulties become too severe, the fiery trials too hot, he will provide a way of escape. (I Cor. 10:13) What more could the Lord say to seal, to secure, our inheritance for us? Let us rejoice in his assurances of victory, and continue on faithfully to the end!

CHAPTER VIII

Filled with the Spirit

"Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."—Ephesians 5:18, 19

THE expression, "filled with the Spirit," is used a number of times in the New Testament, but not always with the same meaning. It was first spoken by an angel in a proclamation to Zacharias concerning his wife Elizabeth, assuring him that in answer to his prayer she would bear a son, and that his name should be called John. The angel further said, "Thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God." (Luke 1:14-16) Here the thought simply is that John the Baptist would be endued with God's power and blessing to enable him to accomplish a special work of reformation in Israel.

In Luke 1:41 we are told that Mary, the mother of Jesus, visited Elizabeth, and when Elizabeth heard her salutation "the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit." This denotes Elizabeth's great rejoicing over the miraculous events which were occurring in

connection with her and Mary. The Spirit or power of God was being exercised through both these women, and to their great joy.

Luke 1:67 informs us that Zacharias was "filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied." Here is a work of the Holy Spirit similar to what occurred during Old Testament times when the prophets "spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (II Pet. 1:21) Zacharias was undoubtedly happily in harmony with the truth, and enthusiastic over the prophecy which the Holy Spirit enabled him to utter, but the Spirit did not beget him to a new life, neither did it fill him with the fruits of righteousness.

In John 3:34 it is said concerning Jesus: "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." This surely implies that Jesus was "filled with the Holy Spirit." He was so filled, and so overwhelmingly controlled by it in his every thought and word and deed, that everything he said and every act of his consecrated, Spirit-filled life expressed the mind or will of his Father who sent him. Jesus' filling with the Spirit occurred at Jordan, although even before this there was a certain preparation, in that he doubtless had acquainted himself well with the Spirit-inspired testimony contained in the "volume of the book"; that is, the Old Testament Scriptures.

As we have noted in a previous article, the Spirit of God came upon Jesus as a miraculous revealing power, enabling him to understand the meaning of the Old Testament Scriptures. And besides this, the Spirit which filled Jesus' life empowered him to perform miracles—to cast out devils, open blind eyes, cleanse the lepers, heal the sick, and raise the dead. Not all the Lord's followers may expect to be filled with the Spirit in this sense.

When the promise to send the Holy Spirit was fulfilled at Pentecost, there were miraculous manifestations of this

“shedding forth” of the holy power of God. One of these is mentioned in Acts 2:4, which reads, “They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Here, being “filled with the Spirit” denotes another miraculous exercise of divine power, enabling those who were “filled” to speak in foreign tongues without the necessity of previous study. This was not unlike the manner in which the Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to perform miracles. Later, in fact, the apostles performed miracles other than speaking with tongues.

In Acts 9:17 our attention is called to a similar instance involving a filling with the Spirit. In this case it is Saul of Tarsus, who, struck down by a blinding light on the way to Damascus, and hearing the question, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” had, by the Lord’s direction, gone to a certain home in Damascus to await further instructions from the Lord. Those instructions were sent to him by a disciple named Ananias. Entering the room where he found the converted persecutor of the church, Ananias said, “Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Saul, or Paul, was appointed by God to take the place of Judas, and it was essential, therefore, that he be “filled with the Spirit” even as the other apostles were at Pentecost. And he was thus filled, because he was able to perform miracles and speak with tongues, even as they.

One of the powers given Jesus and the apostles by the miraculous infilling of the Spirit was the ability to read the hearts of those with whom they came in contact. It was upon this basis that Jesus was able to call the Pharisees hypocrites. Paul was given this ability. In Acts 13:6-12 we are presented with a very interesting example of this. “Elymas the sorcerer” undertook to interfere with Paul’s

work, especially Paul's effort to interest a certain "deputy" in the Gospel of Christ. We read, "Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Spirit, set his eyes on him [the sorcerer], and said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand." Paul was able to execute this punishment upon the sorcerer because he was "filled with the Holy Spirit."

A further miraculous manifestation of the infilling of the Holy Spirit is recounted by Paul in his letter to the church at Rome, chapter 15, verses 18 and 19. Paul writes, "I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ." Every ambassador of Christ should preach the Gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit, but it was given to the twelve apostles alone to proclaim the message against a background of "mighty signs and wonders."

All Disciples May Be Filled

While Jesus and the apostles were the only ones of the new creation class who were "filled with the Spirit" in the sense of being endued with miracle-working power from God, all the true disciples of the Master may be "filled with the Spirit" in the sense that God's thoughts and plans as revealed in his Word, and his will for them, become the all-absorbing, all-consuming, overwhelming power in their lives. It is this that is indicated in our text.

Immediately preceding this admonition, and in contrast with it, Paul writes, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be ye filled with the Spirit." Clearly the reference here is to the intoxicating effect of strong drink. To be "drunk with wine" means to be brought fully under the control of its intoxicating power. One who is thus intoxicated is unable properly to exercise his own mind. This is wrong, Paul indicates, and instead of this, the Christian should endeavor to be "filled with the Spirit." The thought is that if we are filled with the Spirit our fleshly minds will also be rendered subservient, not to the stupifying effect of alcohol, but to the will of God. God's thoughts, revealing his will through his written Word, will take control, so that our chief concern—yes, our only concern in all things—will be to do his will.

Filling Through Fellowship

Having written this exhortation to be "filled with the Spirit," Paul then suggests one of the ways it can be accomplished. It is through "speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." In a general ways this suggests the privilege and the value of Christian fellowship in terms of being "filled with the Spirit." In this text Paul seems primarily to be describing a "praise service"—the use of "spiritual songs."

The inspirational power of music is well known. The martial strains of a military band have encouraged many young men to die for their country. So the "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" of the Christian have an inspirational value in his life. When sung together, as in an assembly, the result is salutary, helping all who participate to be more fully devoted to the Lord through the renouncing of self-will that the will of God might rule more fully in their consecrated lives.

As a rule, however, these sessions of united praise to the Lord are not a large factor in any congregation of the saints. On the other hand, the entire plan of God for his "new creation" and for the world is as a melodious, harmonious song. Indeed, it is designated the "song of Moses and the Lamb." (Rev. 15:3) In Psalm 40:3 and also in Revelation 14:3, it is described as a "new song." This marvelously harmonious unfolding of God's eternal purpose through Christ Jesus, as set forth by the Holy Spirit throughout God's written Word, when understood and appreciated, eclipses every other consideration of life. To know it, to believe it, to obey it, to have our lives consumed by it, is to be "filled with the Spirit."

Sincere, energetic Bible study is, then, one of the potent means of being "filled with the Spirit." Because of our faulty memories we cannot expect to read the promises of God once and retain them in our minds. Besides, the Bible is so written that almost every time we open its Spirit-inspired pages we see some rare gem of truth never before noticed. The poet has well said,

" 'Tis a mine, aye deeper too,
Than can mortal ever go
Search we may for many years;
Still some new rich gem appears."

And as we thus plumb deeper and deeper into the revealing thoughts of God recorded in the Word, and our minds and hearts yield in a rejoicing desire to bring our lives into harmony with each revealing ray of light that beams forth from it, we become increasingly filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus received the Spirit without measure. This was because he was perfect. We are imperfect. The "motions of sins" in our "flesh" bar the complete infilling of the Spirit for which our hearts yearn. (Rom. 7:5) Yet we can, and should, strive to be more and more emptied of

self that the Holy Spirit might fill and more fully control our thinking, our speaking, and our acting.

Filled Through Prayer

Jesus said to his disciples, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:13) Here is an important promise, for it assures us that one of the means of being "filled with the Spirit" is through prayer. Through prayer, we claim the promises of God, and since we know he wants us to be filled with his Spirit, it is proper, and needful, that we earnestly petition him to this end.

But we should not expect a miraculous answer to our prayers for the Holy Spirit. The miracle-working power of God has already operated in furnishing us with his written Word, the source of his thoughts for all the "new creation" class. It is true, of course, that God still uses his unlimited power in shaping his providences for us, that we might be brought into contact with his Word. He has given his angels charge over us to see that nothing can happen which will defeat his purpose in our lives. But in asking him for his Spirit, we must not expect that God will miraculously fill our minds with his thoughts.

When we ask God for his Holy Spirit, we must co-operate with him in the zealous use of the provision he has made whereby we might be filled. We must go to his Word. If we could but fully realize, as the consecrated people of God, that when we open the pages of the Bible and read its wonderful messages, we are looking into the mind of our Heavenly Father, and there discovering his will for us, and his thoughts toward us, how much more precious would be the hours spent in the study of his Word! Actually, they are hours spent with God. David wrote that God's thoughts to "us-ward" are more than can be numbered. (Ps. 40:5)

Those thoughts are in the written Word, put there by the power of the Holy Spirit, that in studying it we may be "filled with the Spirit."

Fruits of the Spirit

The infilling of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the children of God is manifested in the fruits of righteousness. Paul wrote to the brethren at Rome, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." (Rom. 15:13, 14) Here we observe that being filled with joy and peace is a result of the indwelling Spirit of God. To be filled with the Spirit also means to be "full of goodness," and "filled with all knowledge."

In Ephesians 3:19 Paul describes being "filled with the Spirit" as being "filled with all the fulness of God." Obviously, God does not personally enter into his people, but his Spirit does, his holy thoughts, which he has caused to be mirrored through his Word. Paul also speaks of Christ dwelling in our hearts. We will quote this whole revealing passage. Paul prays "that he [God] would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth [human] knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."—Eph. 3:16-19

In Philippians 1:9-11 Paul, without using the words Holy Spirit, nevertheless reveals some of the qualities of a Spirit-filled life. We quote: "This I pray, that your love

may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." No one could be filled with the "fruits of righteousness" without being "filled with the Spirit," for the fruits of righteousness are the fruits of the Holy Spirit of God, the result of the Holy Spirit of truth working in the heart and life.

Again, in Colossians 1:8-11 we read, "Who [Epaphras] also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power [Spirit], unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness."

This is a remarkable summary of many of the things which result from being "filled with the Spirit." It means to be "filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." If we are thus filled, we will "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." Also, we will be "fruitful in every good work," the "fruit of the Spirit" being abundantly manifested in our daily lives. Being "filled with the Spirit" also results in an increasing knowledge of the Lord, through the Word of truth, which, in turn, will lead to our being "strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power." This power, this strength of the Lord which is the daily portion of the Spirit-filled life, enables the Christian to be patient in trial, and long-suffering in the face of every difficulty—not merely in the sense of enduring what cannot be changed, but with "joyfulness."

The Holy Spirit of truth with which every Gospel Age saint of God may, and will, be filled if he is living up to his privileges, is a gift from God. Paul mentions some of its characteristics in his second letter to Timothy. He speaks of stirring up the "gift of God" which was in Timothy. Then Paul adds, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

As we have seen, the Spirit of God is a Spirit of power. His Spirit-inspired Word is a mighty power in the lives of those who yield to its directives, and are strengthened by its promises. Besides, the Spirit of God, operating through whatever agencies he may choose to shape his providences in our lives, is "Almighty." He alone, through the instructions of his Word, and in whatever other ways his wisdom may choose, is able to cause "all things to work together" for the good of his people. (Rom. 8:28) His record of achievement always has been, is now, and ever shall be, perfect. Can we doubt his mercy, his ability, who through life has been our Guide?

The Spirit of God with which his people are filled is also one of love. It displaces selfishness, and all of its characteristics of envy, malice, hatred, and strife. It leads to self-sacrifice on behalf of others and kindness in association with them. Christians who lack these qualities may question the extent to which they are "filled with the Spirit."

Paul says that God has also given us the "spirit of a sound mind." This is because he has given us his own thoughts, his own mind, by which, in our consecration, we have agreed to be governed. The Holy Spirit of God does not change the contour of the brain to give us soundness of mind. It is simply that we have renounced our own will and ways, and are endeavoring to be guided in our thoughts, words, and actions by the holy thoughts of God

as he has miraculously caused them to be recorded in his written Word.

The mind or will of God which guides the Christian may not seem "sound" in the judgment of the world. In fact, the reverse is true. When the Apostle Paul reasoned on the truth before King Agrippa and Festus, this latter Roman ruler of Judea replied, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." (Acts 26:24) The Greek word here translated "learning" is the same one used by Paul in II Timothy 3:15 and translated "Scriptures."

In this latter text Paul notes that from a child Timothy had known the "Holy Scriptures"—the "Scriptures" which in the next verse he says were given "by inspiration of God," and therefore profitable for "doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

Evidently Festus recognized that Paul's reasoning was based upon the sacred writings of the Old Testament, and his claim was that these had made Paul "mad." Surely Festus did not consider that the study of the Scriptures had given Paul the "spirit of a sound mind." Paul's reply was, "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25) Yes, all the Spirit-inspired words in the "volume of the book" are "words of truth and soberness." To the extent the Lord's people set aside their own reasoning and their own preferences and ways, and are governed by the inspired "words of truth and soberness," they will have the "spirit of a sound mind."

But, as we have noted, the Christian's mind is not sound according to human standards. Peter, before he had received the Holy Spirit, did not think Jesus was being guided by a "sound mind" in voluntarily surrendering himself to his enemies to be put to death. Paul's friends did not think he was acting wisely by insisting on going to

Jerusalem where he knew that bonds and imprisonment awaited him. It is true, nevertheless, that the Holy Spirit of truth does direct those who are controlled by it to lay down their lives in sacrifice. Paul admonished that we present our bodies a living sacrifice, explaining that this is our "reasonable" service—a service, that is, which by God's standards are based on reason, reflecting the exercise of a "sound mind."—Rom. 12:1

Paul sums up beautifully what it means to have the spirit of a sound mind and to be "filled with the Spirit." He says, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."—I Cor. 2:9-14

CHAPTER IX

Sinning Against the Holy Spirit

"Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."—Matthew 12:31, 32

THOSE who claim that the Holy Spirit is the third person in a trinity of gods, of which the Father and the Son are the other two—and all co-equal in power and authority—would have difficulty in explaining this statement by Jesus that while sin against himself would be forgiven, sin against the Holy Spirit would not be forgiven. Certainly this disproves the absolute equality of the Holy Spirit and the Son of God. But there is no need to be concerned with an erroneous doctrine which has come down to us from the Dark Ages. When we understand what the Holy Spirit is, and the circumstances under which these words of the Master were spoken, all is clear, harmonious, logical, and satisfying.

First, let us take the context into consideration. Beginning with verse 22, we are told of one of Jesus' miracles. A man was brought to him "possessed with a devil, blind,

and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw." (vs. 22) The people generally who witnessed this miracle were properly "amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?" (vs. 23) To these Israelites the "son of David" was the promised Christ, and when they saw, through Jesus, the exercise of what they knew must have been divine power, they were convinced that he was indeed the great One whom the God of Israel had promised to send. In their simplicity of mind and humbleness of heart they were glad to acknowledge the truth when it was so conclusively demonstrated to them.

But it was not thus with the Pharisees. When they "heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of devils." (vs. 24) These Pharisees, in their hardness of heart, refused to accept the logical explanation of what they had witnessed. They had seen the power of God, the Holy Spirit of God, manifested in the casting out of a devil from this afflicted man, but were ready and willing to deny the facts, closing their minds to reality.

This was the background of Jesus' statement in our text. By it the Master implies that the Pharisees, in denying the truth of what they had clearly witnessed, had set themselves in opposition to the Holy Spirit of God. Indeed, as he said, they had blasphemed against the Holy Spirit in that they had charged that its good work was in reality the work of the Devil. Such a sin, Jesus said, could not be forgiven, neither in this world, or age, nor in the age to come.

This account highlights the fact that the Holy Spirit is simply the holy power of God by which he accomplishes all his good purposes. In this instance it was exercised through the Master in ridding this afflicted man of the "devil" which was causing him to be blind and dumb, and restoring him to health. It was a miraculous demonstration of divine power. The exercise of divine power is always miraculous,

in the sense that our finite minds are unable to understand it. However, to deny its accomplishments is a sin which God does not overlook.

Why is it that sin against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven? In a broad sense it is sin against light, against knowledge. In the case of the Pharisees, there was the chance that they could misunderstand Jesus' teachings. After all, while he spake as never man spake, their conception of him had to be based upon his words. No fault could be found with Jesus' "gracious words," but in the imperfection and prejudice of the Pharisees they could nonetheless misunderstand the meaning of what he said. This, the Master indicated, could be forgiven. But to distort the meaning of the miracle-working power of the Holy Spirit was not ignorantly done. It was a wilful sin, so could not be forgiven. They had sinned against what they knew to be right.

The application of this principle is seen in God's dealings with Saul of Tarsus, who afterward became the great Apostle Paul. Saul was a bitter opponent of the Christian cause. With what he supposed was a righteous hatred, he persecuted the early believers. But on the way to Damascus on a mission of further persecution, he was struck down to earth by a blinding light, shining above the brightness of the sun at noonday, and heard a voice speak to him, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4) The voice explained, "I am Jesus."—vs. 5

It was in all good conscience that Saul had been opposing Christ and the Christian cause, but now, given a demonstration of the power of God informing him that Jesus truly was the Christ of promise, it changed his whole outlook. Had he been like the Pharisees, he might have insisted that the Devil was trying to interfere with his work of stamping out the heresy of the Nazarene, Jesus, and continued on to Damascus to complete his mission of per-

secution. But Saul's heart was right. He accepted the logic of events, was convinced, and gladly entered into the service of the Messiah whom previously he had been persecuting.

The experience was a severe lesson to Saul, which, even as the great Apostle Paul, he did not forget. It served to keep him humble, and ever to realize how easy it is to be wrong. Writing about it later he said, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."—I Tim. 1:12-14

Yes, Paul had been a "blasphemer," and a "persecutor." He had done great injury to the brethren of Christ. But he had not blasphemed against the Holy Spirit. His sin was against Christ, whom he did not know. He had sinned "ignorantly" and in "unbelief," so mercy was extended to him—great mercy, indeed, for he was forgiven, and exalted to the high position of a special apostle in the church. The situation would have been different if, when that great demonstration of power, which he later characterized as a "vision," was given to him on the Damascus road, he had been "disobedient" to it. This would have been an unforgivable sin.—Acts 26:19

Lying to the Holy Spirit

A very illuminating episode is related in Acts 4:29-5:11. The religious rulers of Israel were much disturbed over the successful ministry of the apostles at Pentecost and later, so "they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus." (Acts 4:18) The Apostles did not obey these instructions. Instead, they reported to their brethren, and held a prayer meeting. Their

prayer concluded thus: "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy Word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus."

Immediately there was a miracle, for we read, "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the Word of God with boldness; and the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all."

These were the miraculous circumstances which caused the believers to sell their houses and lands and turn over the proceeds to the apostles. Little wonder, in view of the Holy Spirit's demonstration among them, that they were induced to take this drastic action. Then we are told that a "certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price," his wife agreeing to it. As Peter told Ananias, he had a right to do this, for he had not been commanded by the Lord to sell his land, or to give any part of the proceeds to the apostles to be used for the common support of the church. His sin was in the fact that he claimed he had turned in all the money when he had not.

Peter asked Ananias why Satan had filled his heart to lie to the Holy Spirit. The meaning of this is apparent when we take into consideration the circumstances. The Holy Spirit had been working mightily in and through the apostles. The place where they held their special prayer meeting shook with its power. The sick were healed, and other signs were brought by the Spirit's power. Filled with

the Spirit, the apostles' preaching was powerful. The entire company was convinced that God was in their midst, including Ananias and Sapphira. But these later were not sincere in the matter. They were willing that their relationship to the Lord, through Jesus, should cost them something, but not all. Yet they wanted their brethren to think they had given all.

The brethren could have been misled in this. But one of the special powers of the Holy Spirit which had been given to Peter was the ability to read the mind and heart. Through the power of God he discerned the deception. Peter said to Ananias, "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." What a lesson this is for all the Lord's people! Let us remember that we stand or fall before the Lord, not before one another.

Sapphira, Peter said, had tempted the Holy Spirit of God—meaning that those through whom the Spirit was operating would be tempted not to call for the judgment upon her which the Lord required. But Peter exercised the authority given him by the Holy Spirit and they both perished. They had sinned against the Holy Spirit and it could not be forgiven them. It was not a sin of ignorance.

Those Once Enlightened

It is not necessary that the miraculous power of God, his Holy Spirit, be outwardly demonstrated in order to sin wilfully against it. In Hebrews 6:4-8 another and different situation is brought to our attention in which it is possible for one to commit sin which cannot be forgiven. We quote: "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly Gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an

open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned."

Here the apostle is discussing those in whose hearts and lives the Holy Spirit has operated through the written Word, and he makes it plain that in this situation also it is possible to sin against the Holy Spirit. They have been "enlightened," so they do not have ignorance as an excuse. They have "tasted of the heavenly Gift." This evidently is a reference to Jesus, whom God gave to be the Redeemer and Savior of the world. They have "tasted" Jesus, which implies more than merely having heard of him.

They were made "partakers of the Holy Spirit." The work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, through the Word of truth, has been too evident to put aside lightly. While not spectacular, as the power of the Spirit was demonstrated to the Pharisees, yet its power in the life of a believer is even more convincing. Who could come under the baptism of the Spirit, and the power of its anointing, the life-giving energy of its begetting, receive of its witness and seal, and be filled with its power for holiness, its peace and its joy, without realizing that he has been enjoying the rich favor of God?

It is through the miracle-working power of the Spirit that the Word of God has reached us with all its enlightenment and inspiration. Those who have "tasted the good Word of God," have, as it were, been face to face with God, for the Word reveals him in his glory, outlining his wisdom, justice, love, and power. Millions read the Bible just because they believe it is a good book; others for its historical value. Some read it simply out of curiosity. But those who have devoted themselves to do God's will, and read the Bible that they might know his will and receive

encouragement to perform it, find that it is a power in their lives. It is the power of the Holy Spirit.

These also, Paul indicates, have tasted of the "powers of the world to come." Prof. Strong states that the Greek word here translated "powers" means "force (literal or figurative) specifically miraculous power (usually by implication a miracle itself.)" Much miracle-working power will be operative in the age to come, and the Hebrew Christians had already tasted some of it. In chapter 2, verses 3 and 4 we read, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing witness, [the word 'them' is in italics, which means that it is not in the original], both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will?"

From this it is clear that the Hebrew brethren, in addition to being enlightened and given the Holy Spirit of truth through the written Word, had witnessed some of the miracle-working power of the Spirit in the signs which were given to those early believers. Perhaps some of them had had bestowed upon them one or more of the miraculous "gifts of the Spirit" mentioned in I Corinthians, chapter 12. In this respect, then, they were in the same position as the Pharisees, and Ananias and Sapphira, who had witnessed the miracles performed by the Holy Spirit. These were "the powers of the world to come." As we know, in the age to come, all the sick will be restored to health, and all the dead will be awakened, the powers of regeneration then being in effect. How that will fill the earth with God's glory!

Thus the apostle informs us that those who fall away from their loyalty to God after having enjoyed all these marvelous favors from him, favors which we might say are summed up in the one word "enlightenment," it is impos-

sible to renew them again to repentance. The falling away of such would be a matter of wilfulness so gross that they would have no desire to repent. By having accepted Christ and enjoyed the merit of his shed blood on their behalf, and then rejecting him, they put him "to open shame." The "enlightenment of these comes through God's only source of enlightenment, which is the Holy Spirit of truth, so in falling away they sin against the Holy Spirit, and cannot be forgiven. Because they cannot be forgiven, and there being no hope of their repenting, these die the "second death," as symbolized by the "fire" which destroys the briars and thistles of verse 8.

A similar presentation of this general thought is found in Hebrews 10:26-29. We quote: "If we sin wilfully after that we have received a knowledge of the truth (have been 'enlightened'), there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" The law given by Moses was typical. Those who died under its judgments will be awakened from death. But those who sin wilfully in this age, after having been enlightened by the Holy Spirit of truth, will go into oblivion forever.

Degrees of Wilfulness

We see no reason from the Scriptures to suppose that a single act of sin against the Holy Spirit results in eternal destruction. True, when Jesus said to the Pharisees that sin against the Holy Spirit could not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come, he implied that their sin in

denying that his miracles were wrought by the power of God would not go unpunished. But this does not necessarily mean that the punishment would be what the Scriptures describe as the "second death."

In Luke 12:47, 48 Jesus lays down a rule governing the punishment of those who sin which is understandable, practical, and just. We read, "That servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." In other words, the degree of enlightenment determines the extent of responsibility. Those mentioned by Paul in Hebrews 6:4-8 and 10:26-29 are indicated to be sufficiently enlightened, and their sin against light so persistent and continuous that there is no repentance, no turning around. That is why their punishment is shown to be eternal death.

And notice, the principle set forth by Jesus is specifically said to apply to the Lord's servants. The unbelieving world, in its almost total ignorance of God, is not on probation now at all, but only the servants of God and those who profess to be his servants. This includes the Pharisees, who in Jesus' day claimed that they were the representatives of God. This made them responsible, especially when they denied the power of him whom they claimed to serve. They will be punished, and doubtless with many "stripes," but the Bible does not indicate that they necessarily died the "second death."

The "Great Transgression"

It is apparent from the Scriptures that it is possible for those enlightened by the Holy Spirit of truth, through the written Word, to "fall away." It is equally clear, however, that such a calamity does not occur suddenly. There is a

gradual encroachment of sin, beginning perhaps with but a slight degree of laxity, but finally ending in what the psalmist describes as the "great transgression." This is a complete denial of the Lord, the truth, and the power of the Holy Spirit in one's life.

In Psalm 19:12 and 13, David traces this gradual development of sin, and in the 14th verse utters a touching prayer expressive of every true Christian's desire to please the Lord. He asks, "Who can understand his errors?" In the preceding verses the psalmist speaks of the power of God's law, his testimony, and his statutes, his commandments "pure," to make his people "wise," and to "enlighten" them. "By them," David says, are the Lord's servants warned, "and in keeping of them there is great reward."—vss. 7-11

In asking the question, "Who can understand his errors?" it would seem that David is implying that no one, apart from the Word of God, can enlighten, or reveal them. Then his prayer, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults"—faults that I do not realize I possess. Help me to turn on myself the searchlight of thy Word that the beginnings of sin may be detected, and may the cleansing power of thy truth make me clean and pure in thy sight.

David continues his prayer, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me." Presumptuous sins are wilful sins, sins against light, against the Holy Spirit. Perhaps nearly all the Lord's people, at one time or another in their Christian life, are guilty of one or more presumptuous sins. These are not "secret faults," although they might be the outgrowth of a wrong condition of mind and heart of which one is not aware. But notice David's prayer—"Let them not have dominion over me." In a moment of impetuosity one might commit a presumptuous sin, a sin which cannot be forgiven, and a sin therefore that calls for "stripes." But

still it does not follow that such sins must necessarily have dominion over us.

For presumptuous sins to have dominion over one means that he has given up all effort to control his life in keeping with the directives of the Word. It would mean, as David continues, that such a one was guilty of the "great transgression"; that transgression so great, so wilful, and so continuous, that the only suitable punishment would be the "second death." Such is the growth of sin if not checked.

The only safe course for any of the Lord's people lies in the attitude expressed by David, when in further prayer to God he pleaded, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer." We can co-operate with the Lord in the answering of this prayer, through continued and earnest searching his Word, that we might know the things which are acceptable to him, and pleasing in his sight. Thus we will be safeguarded from sinning against the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER X

The Spirit on All Flesh

"The Spirit [shall] be poured out upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever."

—Isaiah 32:15-17

WE HAVE seen that the Spirit, or power of God, has continued to operate in connection with the accomplishment of his purposes with respect to the earth ever since the completion of that tremendous work of creation to prepare our planet for human habitation. We read that even when the earth was still empty and void "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."—Gen. 1:2

In the case of the inanimate things of creation, God's Spirit, or power, operates arbitrarily to accomplish his purposes; but in the case of man, created in his own image, it operates upon the basis of adequate instructions pertaining to the divine will under any given circumstance or circumstances. It may exercise influence in the heart of an individual, or a group of individuals, to move in a general course, but always upon the basis of imparted information.

The information concerning the will of God is often referred to in the Scriptures as his "Word," and the imparting of that Word is sometimes described by the expression,

“Thus saith the Lord.” At times this expression might refer to a message he gave to a prophet to deliver to his people; at other times—in Old Testament history—God frequently spoke to his people through an angel.

Throughout the age of the prophets God was causing his Word to be recorded in a permanent form, and these writings we now call the Old Testament. Beginning with New Testament times the Lord used his Spirit-inspired prophets to set forth his will on all points pertaining to their association with him in the divine plan. Thus we could refer to both the Old and New Testaments as “scripture given by the inspiration of God,” and the Apostle Paul wrote, “All scripture given by inspiration of God [inspired by the Holy Spirit], is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”—II Tim. 3:16, 17

Will Not Return Void

The Lord’s Word describes the Creator’s grand design on behalf of mankind as a work of reconciliation. Man, in the beginning, transgressed divine law, and thus through sin became alienated from his Creator. But God in his love made provision for man’s restoration to his favor, and that provision is through Christ. Paul wrote, “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.”—II Cor. 5:19

God’s enthusiasm for this provision for reconciliation which he was prompted by his love to make, and of its ultimate and full accomplishment, is set forth beautifully in Isaiah 55:6-11. We quote:

“Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto

the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

The Earth Filled with God's Glory

In Isaiah 6:1-3 we are presented with a prophecy which reveals that eventually the glory of the Lord will fill the earth. But this is a prophecy—not a description of conditions as they existed then, or actually exist in the earth today. Another prophecy which emphasizes a similar thought pertains to the great future part which Jesus will play in the Creator's grand design, and reads, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots; and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear [reverence] of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the

young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."—Isa. 11:1-9

Here we have described a beautiful atmosphere of righteousness and peace in God's holy "mountain," or kingdom, and it is shown to prevail throughout the earth because of the righteous rulership of the Branch which grows out of the root of Jesse. This is none other than Jesus, the righteous Ruler, in his millennial kingdom, in which his faithful followers of the present time will live and reign with him. It will be a righteous rulership because "the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him."

The Spirit of the Lord will radiate from Jesus, and from all who participate in that future kingdom, and in due time will fill the whole earth. It will not only be exemplified in the righteous rulership of the millennial kingdom, but will reach the people through the Word of the Lord which then will be made known to all mankind. The prophecy of Isaiah 2:2, 3 emphasizes this. Here again the messianic kingdom is likened to a mountain—the mountain of the Lord—and concerning it we read:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

In Micah 4:1-4 we have a similar prophecy to the one quoted above in which the Lord's mouthpiece enlarges upon the thought of learning the Lord's ways and walking in his paths, as a result of the Word of the Lord which will then go forth from symbolic Jerusalem. He explains that as a result of learning the Lord's ways they will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; that nations will no longer lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. Here is another result of the influence of God's Holy Spirit operating throughout the earth. Truly that will be a blessed time!

The Words of the Lord Not Now Clear to All

The words, or instructions, of the Lord have gone forth to his own people in a limited way throughout the centuries. The humble of heart, in the spirit of obedience, have been guided by them. Micah 6:8 speaks of those who "walk humbly with their God." We walk humbly with our God when, in full devotion, we accept his will for us as outlined in his Word, and do that will regardless of what the cost might be to us.

But in all the ages there have been those who have professed to be God's people, yet who have not at all times walked humbly with him. The result of this has been that they have failed to have a clear perception of his will and plan for them. They have not been guided by the Lord's Holy Spirit. Some of those in this category are mentioned in Isaiah 29:9. We quote:

"Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry; they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink; for the Lord hath poured upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: your prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men delivered to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee, and he saith, I cannot; for it is

sealed. And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned."—vss. 9-12

Then, through the prophet, the Lord speaks of these people turning things upside down, and teaching the people to fear rather than love him. The learned man, the professor, the one who is trained to know God and his will, insists that he is unable to read the "book" because it is sealed. The unlearned man simply makes a plea of ignorance. He had looked up to the learned and they had failed him, and now he is helpless. The understanding of their wise and prudent men shall come to naught, but the message of God's will as contained in the "book" will not fail. As the Bible declares, it shall not return unto the Lord void, but shall, in his own due time and way, accomplish all his good purposes.

The Book Opened

This prophecy carries through to a time when the "book" that is once sealed is opened: "Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest? And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness."—vss. 17, 18

Notice chapter 32:15, which also speaks of a time when the wilderness shall become "a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted as a forest." It is then that the Lord pours out his Spirit from on high; and it is as a result of this that the spiritually blind and deaf see and hear the words of the "book." In other words, that will be the time when, the knowledge of the Lord filling the earth, his ways will be made plain to all mankind, and they will rejoice in his wisdom, justice, love, and power.

That will be the time also when, as Isaiah assures us, the

“meek shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.” (ch. 29:19) Isaiah continues: “For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off: that make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.”—vss. 20, 21

The “terrible one” who is brought low, according to this prophecy, could well be Satan, the Devil. He has been a great oppressor of the people, and also the deceiver of all nations. In the 20th chapter of Revelation, which is one of the “kingdom” chapters of the Bible, we are told of a mighty angel which comes down from heaven and binds Satan, that he might deceive the nations no more. This will, in no small way, prepare for the dissemination of the truth of God’s will in the hearts and minds of the people and enable them to understand the true knowledge of God—the “pure language” which he will then turn to the people.” —Zeph. 3:9

“Therefore thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither will his face now wax pale. But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.” (vss. 22-24) Yes, that will be the time when the people shall come to a true understanding of the Lord; they will learn “doctrine,” or teachings—the true teachings of God’s will for them—with no one permitted to deceive.

The restoration of Israel as a people, together with the restitution of all the families of the earth, takes place during the millennial reign of Christ. And while many of them are regathered to their land prior to this, and in prepara-

tion for it, in God's due time he will pour out his Spirit upon them and they will have understanding and life. The Lord foretold: "When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God."—Ezek. 39:27-29

The Books Opened

Revelation 20:12 depicts a judgment day scene in which again the impartation of knowledge is symbolized by the opening of books. This is the judgment day of the world—a thousand years in length—the judgment day of the church having already passed. The work of judging the church has progressed during the present Gospel era, and those found worthy will live and reign with Christ in his kingdom, and will be co-judges with him.

The text in question reads: "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened." This does not mean a literal standing up in an open field. The thought is, rather, of having a standing before God and being dealt with by him through Christ. And when this becomes true the "books" will be opened, and the dead will be "judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

The language here is very clear, and two things are mentioned; first, the things written in the books; and second, the works of the people which, it is clear, must be made to conform to the things written in the books. And then there is another book, "the book of life." Those who, through obedience to the things written in the opened books, pass

the tests of the judgment day, have their names enrolled in the book of life. In other words, while they all died in Adam, they are now made alive in Christ.

And this will include more than merely those who will be living at the time the judgment-day work begins, for as we continue reading the prophecy we find that the dead also are brought upon the scene: "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works." (vs. 13) We rejoice in this blessed hope for the world of mankind. How they will rejoice to gain a true knowledge of God and his will for them through the opened "books"!

In Their Hearts

But this will be more than a "head knowledge" of God's plan and will for the people. In Jeremiah 31:31-34 we are told of a time when a "new covenant" will be made, first with Israel, and then with all mankind. It is a beautiful description of what the pouring out of God's Spirit upon mankind will ultimately mean, the Spirit being imparted to them through a true knowledge of God. We quote:

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest

of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

The full carrying out of this promise during the thousand-year reign of Christ will mean the restoration of the human race to the perfection lost by the disobedience of our first parents, and the restoration of the divine image in man as it was at the beginning. How glorious it will be for all mankind, then, when God's Spirit is poured out from on high!