

"THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH"

THE OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Our subject this evening is concerning the operations of the Holy Spirit. It is well that we should sometimes speak of the Holy Spirit, not that we desire an undue proportion, for we know very well that the Holy Spirit, when guiding the ministry will take things of Christ, and emphasize Christ, and therefore an undue proportion of preaching ABOUT the Holy Spirit would not be in the power of the Holy Spirit. But it is well at least sometimes to think of that wondrous Person, and His wondrous workings. I say "Person", and it is well to remember that we are not thinking of a thing, not speaking of an influence, but of a Person, a living Person, a Divine Person, One Who is God, equal with the Father and the Lord Jesus, in the wondrous unity of the Name LORD, as we read of the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, the One Name. The Name of the Spirit, is, in its meaning, suggestive of His hidden nature, and of His wondrous working, for it is a similar word to that of 'air' or 'breath' and the Spirit of God is the Unseen One Who is working with vital power. Oh! that it might be so in our meeting this evening. The word for 'Spirit' is neuter in the Greek, and on that account some have been misled through the passages where the Spirit of God is called "IT". Let it be realized that Christ is called the Light, which is neuter, and that both feminine and neuter names are given to Him in the Scriptures, and one can see that the pronoun agreeing in the Greek must necessarily be sometimes feminine or neuter, hence the 'IT' of the Spirit, the Spirit ITself. But in English that hardly brings out the meaning, for the word "Spirit" is not neuter, that is, our grammar is quite distinct from that of Greek. Therefore it is preferable to render it "The Spirit HIMSELF". But the fact that the word "Spirit" is neuter makes it more remarkable that in certain passages of Scripture there is almost a going out of the way to emphasize that the Holy Spirit is a Person, for we have the pronoun put in the masculine though in close proximity, for the word for Spirit which is neuter. The word "ekeinos" - that one, is used seven times in the last address of the Lord Jesus. Take for example John 15.26,27 and John 16.13. Moreover the Holy Spirit is there called another Paraclete like the Lord

Jesus. How could such words have been spoken of a mere influence or thing? How could such words be spoken of a person who was not Divine? Moreover the Holy Spirit's personality is before us, in that which is declared concerning witnesses as Rom. 8, and 1 John 5, reveals. He can be grieved, as Eph. 4 shows us. That is the One against Whom men lie, as Acts 5 reveals. He had fellowship with the Father in the sending of the Lord Jesus, as Isaiah 48.16 shows.

With that little preface we pass to consider the operations of this wondrous Divine Person, feeling the need for reverence lest we should say anything concerning Him what will grieve Him, for though an ignorant sin is not so terrible as a wilful one, and though in mercy we have been preserved from blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, that sin which is a state of sin, and a continuance and delight in sin and choosing wilfully of sin, though we have been mercifully preserved from that, there is a danger lest we should misrepresent the Holy Spirit even when seeking to explain His wonderful and complex operations.

The work of the Spirit of God in other dispensations deserves prayerful thought. In Psalm 33 we see that the Spirit of God's Mouth was connected with the original creation, and in Gen. 1, when the earth became without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep, the next event was that the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and God said, "Let there be light". Doubtless there is true history and true parable in that wondrous statement for when man is ruined, the need is that first the Spirit of God should move on the face of the deep, a Personal Spirit of God; and the God Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness should shine in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Thus we have the work of the Holy Spirit with respect to creation and restoration, then we have His work in the Scriptures in other dispensations, guiding the servants who wrote, for men of God spoke as they were BORNE ALONG by the Spirit of God, and we find that David distinctly claimed that the Spirit of God spoke by him. There was no mere thought inspiration, no mere general controlling inspiration, but a direct personal and verbal instruction causing the words spoken, and the words written to be the very words of the living

God, so that ALL Scripture, not merely as spoken, but as written - for that is what the word signifies - ALL Scripture is God-breathed. You cannot breathe thoughts, and as a rule you do not speak of written words being breathed, but God emphasizes that the original Scriptures were written word for word as He desired it, with no word changed, no word unnecessary, no word misplaced. Truly we may praise God for the work of the Holy Spirit in other dispensations in preparing for us the precious Hebrew Scriptures.

Then we have the work of the Spirit of God in dealing with individuals in the olden times. We remember that in Psalm 51 David, not only prophetically but personally said, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit away from me". There was truly a work of the Spirit of God in those who are called children with respect to God; - if they knew Him as Father there must have been a Divine work of the Spirit of God, and though they only saw through a glass darkly, even more that we only see through a glass darkly, though they were more in mystery than we are in mystery as to the things of God, yet nevertheless the Spirit of God was working in those olden times revealing to them more of their position as servants than of their position which we now see to be ours in Christ as sons of the living God.

It is remarkable that we read of the Holy Spirit coming upon certain ones in the book of Judges; the book of ruin. It is true we find it earlier in the Pentateuch, but especially, seven times, I believe, a similar expression is used in Judges. For the Spirit of God came upon, or clothed Himself with certain ones. It is remarkable, moreover, that this was not always a saving work. When we find the Spirit of God came on Saul, though temporarily. Nor was it always linked with a sanctifying experience for the Spirit of God came several times upon Samson who was a man of faith in measure, and yet a man of failure. These points are not unimportant. They bring before us the sovereignty of the Spirit of God, and His right to work where He pleases and as He pleases, that He is not merely limited to those in whose heart God is working, nor is He limited to those who are growing ⁱⁿ grace. He can use a Balaam if it pleases Him, He can work miracles by whatsoever means He is pleased to employ that no flesh should glory in His presence. Moreover His work in the olden times prevents us from boasting. We are not to say, "Oh!

this is the dispensation in which the Spirit of God is manifest and He was not manifest before". We can say and say truthfully that there has been a fuller unveiling of the work of the Spirit of God and that at Pentecost there was a new unity created by the Holy Spirit, but we need to beware lest by any unguarded language we turn our privileges into boastings, and make our wondrous acceptance in Christ to be a background for looking down on saints in olden times, who perhaps knew more of the Lord than we are apt to think they knew, perhaps knew more of the Lord than we ourselves know, though I grant that in these days we OUGHT to know more than Abraham did, we ought to know more than what David and Isaiah did, for it was revealed to them that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now announced by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, which things the angels desire to look into, - which wondrous privileges should make us prayerful, but never are we called by God to be boastful.

We pass now to consider the convicting and quickening work of the Spirit of God. Convicting is a legal work. The Spirit is said in John 16, to convict, and we are told in 1 Peter 3 how that Christ in Spirit preached to those who have now become spirits in prison, and that He judged among them or convicted. You know the passage in Gen. 6 "My Spirit shall not always judge among men". Then was the convicting work of the Spirit of God though men were not convinced. There is now a general work of the Spirit of God through the word and through other means that He is pleased to employ, so that they are without excuse. But apart from this general convicting work there is the blessedly complete convicting work, - when the Spirit of God lays low a sinner, when the commandment is not merely a written word, but when it comes with living power. When the commandment came to Saul of Tarsus, then the Spirit of God as it were clothed Himself with the commandment, and made it an arrow which was shap, that the one whom the Lord had marked out to be His, might be laid low, for the Lord said, "I kill and I make alive". "I wound and I heal". There must be a killing first, there must be a wounding first, there must be the broken-down man on the road to Jericho before the good Samaritan can pour in oil and wine. It is blessed thing if by grace we have received the convicting work of

the Spirit of God. But let us not think it is merely past. It is still His work to point out unto us failure, and to show us through the Scriptures when we sin against God. The Spirit of God causes believers to know when they grieve Him, and though there is not the withdrawing of a Divine work, nor the alteration of a Divine Power, there is, sometimes in the conscious realization of God's people, there is solemnly less COMMUNION of the Spirit of which 2 Cor. 13 verse 14 strikingly tells.

Linked with the convicting of the Spirit of God we might deal with the quickening of the Spirit of God. The Spirit quickeneth as He wills, for we read in John 3 that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and again in ch. 6.63, "It is the Spirit That quickeneth". If we once realize that men are incapable of improvement, that they are too far gone - I mean incapable to make them fit for God, if we realize this we shall understand the precious words "If any man be in Christ there is a new creation". Beloved friends, let us ask ourselves as before God if we have experienced this new creation? If there has not been a passing out of death into life, all our good wishes and good hopes and good intentions, and good realizations, are poor counterfeits, and only good in our own estimation. This creation which is a Divine operation, is linked with faith of the in-working of God, and is said in Eph. 2 to be in Christ Jesus, but it is by the work of the Spirit of God. The exact moment of quickening may not be known, - I had almost said, it cannot be known. We know when we enter into something of the joy of salvation, but who can tell when God begins a work? Who can tell that tiny, unseen, and almost unfelt beginning of a Divine work, in accord with a Triune purpose and to lead to an eternal security? As with natural birth there are mysteries, with spiritual birth there are great mysteries, and if the believer can in some measure realize the time of his new birth, it is not always manifest to others until a little time afterwards. Everything is covered with mystery that God may take all the glory away from man. It is sad on account of this that many have been misled, they have sought for results begotten of emotion, and have imagined that they have led thousands of souls to Christ, when perhaps the time in which some were brought manifestly to accept Him was a while after they were brought to know the Divine working, or at least to experience it almost unconsciously. I do not say

this to speak against the idea of bringing before those who are in measure impressed the importance of being among those who confess the Name of Christ. It is important, and there is a crisis when there is the believing consciously into the Name of the only begotten Son of God. A precious crisis, a glorious crisis, more marked in the experience of some than of others. I do not want to say a word against this, but what I do want to emphasize is the quiet background ministry of the children of God living lives near their Lord, which He can use as the means of quickening others so that they can be the instrument of the salvation of some who do not know the instrument that God employed. Those who in their quiet background ministry have not the applause of men, and who do not seem to make public 'efforts', can before God render that acceptable devoted service which He receives, which He uses, and which will be unto His glory. In the home, in daily duties, in tiny details one may even do more for the Lord than on the platform. The greatest hindrance to platform ministry is the failure of life of those who bear the Name of the Lord. The greatest obstacle to Gospel proclamation must ever be regarded as the inconsistency of nominal, aye, and of real christians. We do well to humble ourselves, not only as Daniel in the name of others, but as Daniel again in our own name, to humble ourselves before the Lord for we have failed to witness and failed to be the means in the Lord's hands when we ought to have walked more closely with Him. But whatever means God uses it is the work of the Spirit of God, to quicken. We may have the apparatus, we may have the preaching, we may have the godly living, but still we are dependent upon that wondrous Sovereignty. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth but of God that showeth mercy. Grace is not limited by human failure, grace is not helped by human success, grace is independent of us, but we cannot be independent of grace. It is remarkable that in John 3 where the Lord Jesus addressed Nicodemus, He does not declare if Nicodemus was born again or not. He said to him "Thou", "thou", "thou", but when He said "Ye must be born again", He put it in the plural. He did not say "Thou must be born again". This little silence should show unto us that we cannot tell the moment of birth, when God begins that which will be completed in the day of Jesus Christ.

We pass next to consider the work of the Spirit of God

crying "Abba, Father". "Because ye are sons" says Gal. 4, "God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts crying, "Abba Father". I need not say that we cannot take the expression "God sent forth the Spirit of His Son" to mean simply "new birth". There we have plainly a reference to the personal Holy Spirit sent into the heart even as the Lord Jesus was sent into the world, as the context shows. "Sent into the heart". Not the awful hearts of unsaved ones to improve them, but into the hearts of those who HAVE been born again. Here it is we have a distinct work of the Spirit of God; - the work of the Spirit of God in quickening is to make us children. The work of the Spirit of God in connection with this sending forth is linked with sonship. Now the terms 'child' and 'son' are distinct in Scripture. They both suggest relationship, but the term 'son' has rather an emphasized dignity of those who are begotten again with a view to being God's very own people to all eternity, and being PLACED as sons. "Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts". A work of the Spirit of God is further explained in this connection in Rom. 8. Ye have not received the spirit of servitude again to fear, but the Spirit of sonship in Whom we cry, Abba, Father. Not the Spirit of adoption, no one is ever adopted a child of God. The word 'adoption' is literally 'sonship' and it refers to a present relationship to the Father, in the heart, and a future standing before God, - the manifestation of the Spirit of God seems to be closely linked in Rom. 8 with the indwelling of the Spirit of God, which is the contrast to the indwelling of sin which is brought before us in Rom. 7, and because of that indwelling of the Spirit of God we are enabled to war a good warfare. Because of that indwelling of the Spirit of God we not only have the consciousness of expectance, but are enabled to please God, and go the way God desires us to go. David we have seen, already knew something of the work of the Spirit of God in him, and the Spirit of God even speaking in him. But David knew rather the Spirit of God as a spirit of servitude, we know the indwelling Spirit of sonship, and no dispensational failure can hinder a measure of the enjoyment of this, but personal failure can hinder it.

We pass next to consider the closely related witnessing of the Spirit of God. It is closely related with His convicting, and with His work in the heart, for He witnesses

before men as 1 John 5 says, "It is the Spirit That witnesseth because the Spirit is truth". The Lord Jesus three times over, in John 14.17; 15.26; 16.13 speaks of the Spirit of truth. That is to say the One Who bears the definite witness, and you remember that in that wondrous discourse of the Lord He explained that His people should also bear witness, that is to say bearing witness with that Spirit of Truth Who would testify. But there is a witness of the Spirit of God beyond His witness in the world, beyond His witness in the assembly, there is the witness of the Spirit of God in the heart. The Spirit Himself beareth witness together with our spirit. The two are distinct, but not contrary. The Spirit of God beareth witness with our spirit. That which has been begotten of Him beareth a witness with our spirit, because we are children of God. These words are striking. We need to ask ourselves whether by grace we enter into this co-witnessing of the Spirit of God BECAUSE we are children of God and THAT we are children of God, for there is the twofold thought. Associated therewith is the leading of the Spirit. We read in Rom. 8. 14, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God". Not merely "They are children of God", but "Sons of God", a dignity is suggested. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God", not merely "were led", but "keeping on being led", those who are being guided by the Spirit of God, Who is called "The Guide" in Matt. 23.8, where the word "Christ" should be omitted. "Be ye not called Rabbi, for One is your Guide". We have reference to our Triune God, the Spirit, the Father, and the Son, in verses 8,9 and 10. Then in John 16.13 "He shall lead you into all truth" is "He shall lead you along the way". And again in Gal. 5.18 we have the leading of the Spirit. The term 'born of God' seems to contain, if not exclusively, a similar thought, and in Phil. 1.19 we have the supply of the Spirit, and the word is from the root of leading. We read of those who met together in The Name of the Lord, that they have been led together by the leading of the Spirit of God. "Where two or three have been led together by the leading of the Spirit of God, there am I in the midst". Led together by the leading of the Spirit of God. I know the expression "I am led to do this, or that" is peculiarly dangerous. When a believer has no Scripture for an action, he will frequently say "I was led to do it". It is the loop-hole of self-confidence, and as a rule, one finds that those who know

most of the leading of the Spirit of God speak least about it with reference to themselves, for if the Spirit of God even leaves Himself out in many Scriptures, He will surely guide those who are guided by Him to leave ^{ev}rything out that would glorify themselves. If anyone is led by the Spirit of God, it is not probable he will be led to say he is led as a general rule. The actions and a manifest communion with the Lord should show that there is a dependence upon Him, so that others may take note that there has been no self-decision, but a guiding by God. So far everything seems clear in doctrine, but difficult ~~to~~ practice.

Now we approach that which is difficult in doctrine, and oh that the Lord may mercifully preserve us from mistakes, and glorify His Name in causing a realization of His will alone. What is the sealing of the Spirit of God? The idea of sealing is, as Rev. 7 shows, a claiming, but not only a claiming, a marking. If there be a seal on the body it will be a bodily mark, if there be a seal on the spirit there will be a spiritual mark, and therefore will not be a physical mark. This is important, and I believe we should realize another general principle. God has graciously arranged in days of ruin, a certain parallel with the wonderful powers that were manifest in days before the ruin, as, for example, when God permitted that Israel's temple should be destroyed. He was pleased to be a little sanctuary unto them wherever they were driven, and now that we have lost inspired songs and hymns, we may still have spiritual thankfulness in the expressions that please the Lord in spiritual hymns, that is to say there is the general principle that God grants in days of ruin a measure of that which He granted in days before the ruin came in. That ruin, we know we must acknowledge. We see not the signs which marked the days of Pentecost, there is not the unity of the redeemed upon earth that was visible during that period. The glory of the church in Acts has gone, and instead of that we have the Lord's people as scattered as Israel; as it were, without a temple, and those who are most in harmony with the Lord feel the ruin most. It is possible to overlook it and be galvanized by a human energising into a belief that things are not as bad as they are, but if we look around without wishing to see things better than they are, but simply wishing to see what God would show us, if we look around with an unbiassed desire to see God's teaching by circumstances, we shall I am

sure, feel that there is real ruin, but even as in the days of Haggai, the words may be still sounded, "My Spirit remaineth among you, fear ye not". Yet all the manifest workings of the Spirit are not the same. As to the sealing of the Spirit, this, it would seem, was, both outward and inward. John 6.27 speaks of Christ as the One Who was sealed. In 2 Cor. 1.22, we read concerning the Lord's people that the Lord has sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit into our hearts. Now this is linked with the expression "Hath anointed us". Now the anointing suggests a manifest work of the Lord, and so does the sealing, unless there is the special thought of the inward claiming. What if there are both thoughts here? What if we have not the outward sealing, but still the inward sealing and the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts, if we have not the gifts of the Spirit in manifestation as in the days of old? Take another passage. In Eph. 1.13 we find that the sealing of the Holy Spirit is again linked with the inheritance. "Ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (namely the promise of the millennium and government). Who is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of His glory. I would not limit the term 'promise' to the millennial government, but that is an important thought that is usually overlooked. Now we can understand this passage. The Spirit sealed is the earnest, what was the inheritance? The kingdom. What are the anticipations of the kingdom? The spiritual gifts, for we read in Heb. 6 that they were the powers of the age to come. Then the sealing was, at least part of it, manifest, even as the contrary and contradictory sealing of antichrist in Rev. 13, will be manifest. We cannot say we have this manifest sealing. We thank God for His inward claiming, for His inward working, but there is not the manifestation of the Spirit of God coming upon us as upon Samson of old, and upon the Lord's people on the day of Pentecost.

This leads us on to the subject of baptism in the Spirit. By different names this work and its results are described. We read in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, all the four gospels, that there would be a future baptism of the Spirit. Though each gospel contains very few things that all the other gospels contain, each gospel contains this, and at the beginning of Acts there is the same testimony. The Lord Jesus Christ said,

"Ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you". Plainly therefore the coming upon of the Holy Spirit is distinct from the birth of the Spirit, is distinct from the indwelling of the Spirit, is distinct from that which is associated with the indwelling, is distinct from the sending of the Spirit into our hearts. The coming UPON was the baptizing IN the Spirit. Let us distinguish between the inward work and the outward work. The Spirit of God indwells because He has been sent into the heart. But the Spirit of God also came upon and baptized these disciples in Himself, or rather Christ baptized them in Him on the day of Pentecost. Another expression is used for this in Acts 2 towards the end. Peter said to those who were his friends in verse 38, "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive, - not the birth of the Spirit, - but - the gift of the Holy Spirit. They needed the birth of the Spirit before they would be pricked in their heart, they needed the birth of the Spirit consciously before they were baptized, but the baptism of the Spirit, the gift of the Spirit was subsequent. And what is the next statement? "For the PROMISE is unto you and to your children", not the promise of baptism but the promise linked with the millennial government, as we have in Eph. 1, the Holy Spirit of promise, and Eph. 4.30 declares "Grieve not the Holy Spirit whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption", namely the redemption of the body. So we see the important thought that the Spirit of God came down to give a number of anticipations of the coming kingdom. One anticipation is in the conscious sonship of the Lord's people; and that still remains. Another anticipation was in connection with the unity into the one body which does not remain in its wonderful visibility, in its earthly executive aspect. God has not changed, but God's manifestations may have changed, even as God withdrew the temple of old, and chastened His people in all ages, that He might show it is an awful thing to sin against Him. I believe that, to this coming UPON of the Spirit of God John 20 alludes, where it is written, "Receive Holy Spirit", not "Receive the Holy Spirit AS A PERSON". The words are distinct. The article is even left out when there is the thought of the operations of the Holy Spirit, and Christ did not say "Receive THE Holy Spirit", but "Receive Holy Spirit". That was the baptizing power of the Holy Spirit which was anticipatorily manifested, or explained, in that upper

room where Christ was gathered with His people. Well, this baptism of the Holy Spirit was always with signs following as Mark 16 shows, and as Acts 2, Acts 8, Acts 10 and Acts 19 all reveal. There is no case of an invisible baptism of the Spirit of God. Baptism whether in water or in spirit always succeeds birth, it is never identified with it. The baptism in the Spirit was usually subsequent to water baptism, which is called in 1 Peter 3 "The request of a good conscience". Not "the ANSWER of a good conscience", but the REQUEST of a good conscience, for in water baptism believers ask for the manifestation that the Lord was pleased to give, and also ask for the coming resurrection glory. The two baptisms in water and in the spirit are mentioned in Heb. 6 "The doctrine of baptisms", for they had one doctrine. You remember how it was quite exceptional when on Cornelius the baptism of the Spirit of God came before the baptism in water. "Can any forbid water that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Spirit"? Mark the words "As well as we". Acts 11 explains it thus, "As I began to speak the Holy Spirit FELL on them", not "Came INTO them", but "FELL upon them", as it was at the beginning, that is as cloven tongues of fire, not giving life, but dealing with ministry and power as well with the unity of the redeemed. "Then remembered I the words of the Lord, how He said, "John indeed baptizeth with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit", Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as unto us". So we get the words, gift, baptise, coming upon, falling on, and receiving. All these words are important. Now, one can understand something of the loss in the present dispensation. The term 'baptism' implies a visible unity, the term 'body' implies a visible unity, but now we have not these on earth, let us be humble before God. God's quickening remains, God's indwelling by the Spirit of God remains, we still have the Spirit of sonship, but we HAVE NOT THIS UNITED POWER. Thanks be unto God, for still the Spirit of God is interceding as Rom. 8 puts it "with groanings which cannot be uttered" and while our beloved Lord, in glory, makes intercession for the transgressors, the Holy Spirit meets our needs in guiding us to pray and also in praying for us. Guiding us to pray, for Jude 20 speaks of praying in the Holy Spirit. Who can summarize the other operations of the work of the Spirit of God? His work now in connection with earth is very mysterious. In the future He will be connect-

ed with coming judgment and coming wrath. His work now as being the Spirit sent forth in Rev. 5 is striking. His work also in leading the Lord's people to say "Come, Lord Jesus" and His work in connection with the Triunity of our glorious God is also a subject that might prayerfully be considered some other time. one cannot go into the fulness of teaching of Revelation concerning the Spirit of God. Suffice it to notice that for the first time in Rev. 1 the greetings come from the Spirit. He had in measure withdrawn Himself as to the work of dispensational unity, though not in connection with His saving work. How important to express oneself in Scriptural language upon such a theme. Surely we pray unto the Lord that He will in mercy preserve us from misunderstanding one another, and cause a due confession of sin for what we have lost, and a right desiring of that which is possible, and a right thankfulness of that which saints received in times gone by, for we are linked with them and they with us. This will all be to the praise of the glory of God's grace, and we shall not have met in vain. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit will thus be with all those who by grace have been born of the Spirit.

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