

The King's Highway.

And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness: . . . The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. Isaiah 35:8.

VOL. XII. (New Series.)

WOODSTOCK, N. B., DECEMBER 15, 1900.

(Semi-Monthly.) NO. 9.

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT.

There is no question in theology which leads us more deeply into the glory of God, or that is of more intense, vital and practical importance for our daily life, than that which deals with the work of the Spirit for and in the believer. In what way, and how far can the Holy Spirit dwell in, fill and make into a beautiful "temple of God" the heart of His child; making Christ live there as an ever present Almighty Saviour? If the solution of this question were sought in the presence and teaching of the Spirit Himself, it would transform all our theology into that knowledge of God which is eternal life. In our studies of the blessed Spirit, we have come to the consideration of this important question, "What is the Spirit's work?" In our previous two sermons we travelled over very sacred ground, ground hallowed by the footsteps of Jesus Christ himself. We considered very sacred and solemn truth, truth that only disciples of Jesus could feel and understand. Our previous discourses were in some measure introductory only. We come now to a reverent, believing meditation of the subject, "The work of the Holy Spirit for us and for our salvation." And as we do so, we will remember that the Spirit is not only the author of the whole written word of God, but also its supreme expositor. May our thought and word in some true sense be His, and result for Him.

I. The work of the Holy Spirit is necessary to our salvation. The work of salvation in the saint begins with the work of conviction in the sinner; and the very first thing the Spirit was to do was to convince men of sin and righteousness and judgment.

John 16:8-11 "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

Of sin, because they believe not on me;

Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."

I would not fail to notice in passing, two leading features of this passage, first, it speaks of the Spirit convincing "the world" as distinguished from the disciples of Jesus; secondly, it connects in the closest possible way, the work of conviction with the Lord Jesus Himself: "because they believe not on me," "because I go to my Father." We see in these words of Jesus the assurance that the Holy Spirit in the gospel age shall convince every unregenerate heart, to whom the gospel is given, "of sin, and righteousness, and judgment." He should show that heart its unspeakable need of Christ, its sin against the love of God, the awful glory of righteousness, a glory transcendently displayed in the exaltation of Christ to the heavens, the ineffable rightness, certainty and eternity of the judicial ruin of sin and all that sides with sin. Such should be the conviction of sin under the operating hand of the Holy Spirit. In a way that should make use of all the moral faculties of man, yet penetrating far beneath them. This "convincing whisper" finds its way to the youngest and the most aged conscience alike, to the most miserable and the most happy in outward conditions, to the savage and to the scholar, to the most profligate and to the one like

Saul of Tarsus, sincerely moral. The manner, the method and occasion we do not know, we cannot guess. This conviction was without doubt, the decisive first handling of the soul, so far as we can estimate such facts by the Holy Spirit. In some course of open or hidden rebellion against the light or in the midst of dull complacent indifference, in the house of God, in the mission hall amidst others who were awakened or in the quiet walk on the street, at home or at school, lo, the Spirit touched you into an insight you never had before of sin and righteousness and judgment of the reality and necessity of Jesus Christ. Everything took results from this. Your knowledge of the glory and virtue of the sacrifice of Christ. Your acceptance of Him as your Saviour and Master, your full and glad consecration to His will and service, your love for those as yet in the sleep and death of sin, from which you were awakened. All these became what they could not possibly be without some genuine personal experience of the convincing power of the Spirit. The gospel is a message not for man in the abstract, but for man a sinner; and not until man sees himself a sinner under the Spirit's conviction does the gospel find in him a true place. When the Spirit speaks to his soul of sin, he beholds and believes the divine provision for his release from its guilt and power. Jesus crucified is manifested as God's Antithesis of the guilt of sin.

Jesus risen from the grave is manifested in the glory of His finished work. His perfect righteousness, and Jesus coming again is seen as the crown the climax of God's wonderful redemption. This is the victory of the atoning blood, this is the initiatory work of the Divine Spirit.

II. The reality of the experiences of a Christian life can never be known and felt without the Holy Spirit. Take one chapter in the Bible, the eighth chapter of Romans and you will at once see the truth of our second proposition.

In verse 2 the Spirit is seen as the Spirit of life in Christ, setting us free from the law of sin and death, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

In verse 4:14 we are said to be led by the Spirit so that "we will not walk after the flesh."

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

In verse 5 the Spirit is the one who implants within us the "spiritual mind." "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."

In verse 9 our possessing the Spirit or not possessing Him settles the question of personal relation to God. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

In verse 11 the Spirit is the active agent in our mortal body to quicken it with divine life and health. "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies." Through Him we have power to mortify the evil passions that tempt us in verse 13. "For if ye live after

the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

In verse 15:16 He seals upon all believers the assurance of salvation and sonship. "For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba-Father."

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God."

Verses 26:27, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

I shall present to you two aspects of the Spirit's work in its relation to our Christian life and experience.

1. The Spirit and our regeneration. John 3:5, "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The new birth is not a change of nature, as some call it, it is rather the communication of the divine nature. The Holy Spirit is the medium through whom this life is transmitted. To the Spirit our Lord assigns the immediate agency of the new birth, He ploughs the ground of the heart, convincing of sin, He inserts the live seed the word of God, He conveys the new life, whose secret is love generated of the love of God, He both gives the child state and teaches the new born one to understand it. The Sonship, on which the New Testament dwells so constantly, is based entirely on the new birth through the Spirit of God. By one stroke of Revelation Jesus forever destroys the delusion and dream of men, that by improving and developing the old nature it would become fit for His kingdom. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of heaven."

2. The Spirit and our sanctification. Rom. 1:4, "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Perhaps a reference to the meaning of sanctification might help us to a clearer understanding of this point. In order to get this meaning we will first consider what it is not.

(1) Plainly it is not the new birth. The new birth secures to all believers salvation and sonship, John 1:12. While sanctification brings constant victory over sin, the indwelling of God in the heart, and conformity to the will of God in everything.

(2) It is not a work we can do for ourselves, none can forgive their own sins, or convert themselves, neither can they cleanse their own lives or fill them with purity and love.

(3) It is not self perfection, that is a state in which we come to be crystalized and fixed so that we are incapable of temptation or sin by an inherent right. The soul that is most sanctified can say more truly than others, "In me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing." He must increase, I must decrease. "I am the least of all the saints."

(4) It is not the work of death. A dying hour is a poor time to make a

satisfactory consecration and death would be a grim Saviour. Sin does not have its rise in the body, although it operates on and through it, and the body suffers because of its presence, but in the will and affection.

Then what is sanctification? It is the acceptance of Christ in His perfect life and fullness, to live in and reign over our heart and life, so that we exchange our imperfection for His perfection, so that we are literally united to Him and He "dwells in us," living again His incarnate life in us as truly as He did in Galilee. This is the mystery of mysteries, the secret hid from the ages, the essence of full salvation, the sum of sanctification, the joy, strength and victory of life, and the glad heritage of all who receive Him. "Christ in you the hope of glory" is true sanctification. It is the prerogative of the Holy Spirit to make all this a blessed reality in the life and experience of the child of God. He shows us our deepest need, then fixes our attention on Jesus Christ as God's full supply for that need. Phil. 4:19, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

1 Cor. 1:13, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Once our striving was to be rid of the inveterate habits and evil tendencies of the old life, it's selfishness, it's vanity, it's lusts. Now we are indwelt by the Spirit, and we breathe as a holy atmosphere the perpetual life of Christ. This indwelling of the Spirit can alone effect the exclusion of sin. It is what Dr. Chalmers called "the expulsive power of a new affection." Sanctification is more than cleansing. The perfect scriptural figure of sanctification is not so much the cleansing of the old life—for "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean,"—as it is the death of the old and resurrection into a new. Rom. 6:3-4, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?"

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." "Baptism is really the monogram of the Christian; by it the believer is sealed and certified as a partaker in the death and resurrection of Jesus; and the Holy Spirit has been given to be the executor of the contract thus made at the symbolic grave of Christ." Then further sanctification is much more than abstinence or deliverance from sin. It is a positive thing, full of living and beautiful qualities, and through it's rich and positive reality excludes evil. There are those whose sanctification consists wholly in "not doing." But God wants a soul not only cleared but cultivated, which shall bloom like "the garden of the Lord." Gal. 5:22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith."

Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

This fruit of the Spirit is a divinely given and developed character drawn out of the fullness of Christ; drawn from Christ for us by the Holy Spirit. The "much fruit" of John 15:18 is that character not stunted and dwarfed by unbelief, but expanding in sweet and strong development

in the sunny open air of faith. Let us look a moment at the elements of this inspired analysis of the fruit of paradise grown on earth. These elements are,

(1) "Love, joy, peace." These represent the character in it's relation to God who is the spring of "love" the cause of "joy" the living law of internal "peace."

(2) Longsuffering, gentleness, goodness. These describe it in it's relation to man.

(3) Faithfulness, meekness, self-control, denote the Christian character in the common calls and duties of the day. So the fruit appears in it's fair ripeness. The man born of the Spirit, led by the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, lives and moves in God for man. As we close this point let us remember what is the character we are intended to bear as spiritual men, and what is the divine provision, present and perfect, for the being of that character in us and it's manifestation by us; the eternal Spirit.

III. Acceptable service cannot be performed without the Holy Spirit.

It would seem that the disciples were ready for work after the resurrection of Jesus, they had all the facts of the gospel. They had spent three years with Jesus. They knew His doctrines, had seen His miracles, had witnessed His transfiguration, and were assured of His resurrection, still they were not prepared to go out as heralds of their Master's gospel. They must first be at Jerusalem for their preparation, the infilling of the Spirit. This was to be the one essential of their work. Let us observe that Christ who is our example in this as in all things did not enter His ministry till He had received the Holy Spirit. All His service from His baptism to His ascension was wrought in the Spirit. So was it with the service of the apostles and early disciples. Acts 9:17, "And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him 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 Ghost." We have here a clear allusion to that divine something, distinct from conversion and subsequent to it, we call it the "endowment of power;" and we have well named it; for you cannot fail to notice how constantly through the book of Acts mighty works and mighty utterances are connected with this qualification, Acts 2:4, "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterances." Acts 4:8, "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel." Acts 4:31, "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." Acts 6:3, "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." This anointing of the Spirit marks a decisive and most important crisis in the life of a Christian, in the life of every Christian who receives it. Permit a thought by the way right here.

(CONCLUDED ON FOURTH PAGE.)