

“ IN THE SPIRIT,”

AND

“ THE SPIRIT IN YOU.”

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ROM. viii. 1-27.

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**I**T is important to distinguish between these two things. To be in the Spirit supposes a total change of being, in contrast with nature or the flesh, a new state into which souls enter now on earth. But besides this, there is the actual personal dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer.

To unfold these two truths, we must look a little at the general features of the Epistle to the Romans.

The keystone of the epistle is righteousness—God’s righteousness—*i.e.*, His consistency with Himself in justifying the believer, in virtue of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Nor is there a word about the love of God, nor of victory for the believer, until the whole question of righteousness is settled. This might not seem to us the readiest way to give the heart ease, and peace, and liberty; but it is God’s way

notwithstanding. Since man by his sin has compelled God to take the place of judge, he must learn that God is a righteous judge. But when he learns that the claims of God's righteousness are divinely met by the "obedience unto death" of the Lord Jesus, he learns that whereby his peace is divinely settled likewise.

But man had lost his original tenure, and with it God Himself. To be saved, he must be called: and he is called in God's grace "by glory and virtue" (2 Pet. i.) to something higher than that from which he fell; for now he is to be connected with Christ Himself. In due time, however, God gave promises, and 430 years after these the law by Moses. This raised the question of man's state—a thing that the promise did not touch—because man being a sinner must be made to feel his lost and ruined state, having neither the will nor the power to amend, however much he knew the evil of his ways. Last of all came Christ, the only One who ever made the law lovely as a moral instrument, and responded perfectly to that expression of God's claim on man. He might have therefore taken up the promises in connection with the law; but it is evident, if He did, none could have shared the blessing of the inheritance along with Him. Hence instead of the crown He takes the curse—the judgment of God against sin, instead of the kingdom. And upon the cross He gave Himself to bear the full penalty of sin in the ineffable sufferings of that awful hour. But "it is finished," and thenceforward God's righteousness is (not promised merely, but) revealed. In the Epistle to the Romans, which speaks more of fundamental truth, this is especially traced out in view of man's wants: while in 2 Corinthians we have the heavenly height to which

divine righteousness entitles us in Christ now exalted and glorified above in the glory of God. For, not only was He raised from among the dead (Rom. vi.) by the glory of the Father, but further we read in John xiii., "if God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him." Therefore, instead of waiting for the administration of the fulness of times, instead of giving Him the whole earth and all the nations on it, God glorifies Christ in Himself at once and on high on His own throne in the heavens (Rev. iii. 21). It was a question of God's righteousness, of His moral and heavenly glory: nor was it ever declared before, until He Himself declared it just before He went away.

And now "the righteousness of God is unto (or toward) all, and upon all them that believe," whereby man who had before come short of the glory of God is now made capable of standing in His own presence on high. He is not merely reinstated in the place where he was before the fall. *Reinstating* is not *salvation*. He is now made competent to stand in the presence of the glory of God: for not only was He "delivered for our offences," but more, "He was raised again for our justification," and is now passed into the new and final condition of resurrection, showing the character of the justification which would be given to those who should believe upon Him.

Here, therefore, for the first time in the epistle we have the revelation of "peace with God" and "access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and boast in the hope of the glory of God." Tribulations, too, turn to a matter of boast for us, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to

us: but all this is founded on the righteousness of God. For God must take care of His own glory, and give a due sense of sin to those in whom He was working graciously. It is not a question of winning the unconverted, but in dealing with believers, and more particularly with those who have entered into the joy of the gospel without any very deep work on the conscience, it is of all importance that the righteous side of the gospel, which is "the power of God unto salvation," be maintained, because it is God's righteousness.

Hitherto we have had before us sinners guilty, and God in His own way meeting them as they were—in their sins. But then there is another thing that troubles the awakened soul, and that is not his *sins* but his *sin*; not what he has done, but what he *is* before God. For the most lamentable thing that he finds about himself is that, after conversion and finding peace with God through faith in Jesus, he discovers by sore but profitable experience the inward evil of his nature to be so dreadful that he might not have believed it possible in a child of God.

And it is here that the Christianity of the day stops short of the revealed truth of God, leaving people but half saved, without any clear understanding of what it is to be "in Christ." Not that they do not use the expression, but in their language it means only that He shed His blood and died for them, and that consequently they are clear in the sight of God. But this is not the full meaning of the text. Not only has Jesus died for my sins and risen again for my justification, but my old nature has been judged and condemned in Christ's death. Supposing all my sins blotted out and forgiven, I am still in a state of things

that is a misery to myself and a deep dishonour to God. This was brought in by Adam: "for by one man *sin* entered into the world." But now there is another man—the obedient One—by whom righteousness has come; so that, whereas sin reigned unto death, now grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. This is deliverance by One who has passed through death in obedience into resurrection-life. The consequence is, that from Rom. v. 12. a new subject is discussed altogether—not justification by blood, but "justification of life" (verse 18). Now this is not connected with what Jesus did or was on earth, but what He rose up into. For as Adam only became head of a family when a sinner (*i.e.*, when he had accomplished, as one may say, the work of sin), so the Lord Jesus becomes the recognised Head, the last Adam, the quickening Spirit (1 Cor. xv. 45), when He enters into resurrection. "Unless a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John xii. 24).

The principle is applied in Rom. vi. to sin. In this chapter we are (not risen but) alive, in Christ risen, to God. In Colossians we are viewed as risen with Christ, and in Ephesians as seated in heavenly places in Him (hence there he speaks of the church). But here we are to reckon ourselves as "dead" in our natural state "unto sin, and alive" in a new state "unto God." Thus, not only by the blood of Christ have we got remission of sins, but also in Christ risen a full deliverance from that sinful state into which every child of Adam is born. And this is prefigured even from baptism, which is the very starting point—the initiatory rite of Christianity. Thus the full blessedness of Christ

is for the Christian from the very outset. Nor is he to go back to the law to help it, which would be the denial of Christianity. For the law, instead of being a rule of life, is necessarily, to one who has sin in his nature, a rule of death; instead of being a delivering power, it can only condemn such; far from being a means of holiness, it is in fact, and according to Scripture, "the strength of sin" (1 Cor. xv. 56). What we want is deliverance from it; and this we have in Christ dead and risen again. "Ye are not under law, but under grace" (Rom. vi. 14). And this is a humble as well as a holy walk, where flesh counts for nothing; for we are to reckon ourselves "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus."

Next we come to Rom. vii., and as in the former chapter ye are "dead to sin," so here ye are "dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that ye should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh"—then we are there no longer. In the end of the chapter we have the experience of a man "wretched," but evidently converted, delighting in the law of God after the inward man, but incapable of performing what he wills, or of avoiding what he hates, till in the increasing bitterness of his soul he cries out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?"—not from guilt or the wrath of God, but "from this body of death."

It is this question which is fully answered in the following chapter: Rom. viii. And first, God has in His love already brought in a full deliverance for my soul: by-and-by He will bring in an equally complete deliverance for my body (verse 11). For the "inner man" perfect

emancipation is already wrought, as it will also be yet for the outer. And so it begins by giving the condition, place, or standing of the Christian, resulting from the death and resurrection of Christ. Grace imparts His status to the whole family—and what is the issue for them? “No condemnation (not to those for whom Christ died, but) to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” It is not enough simply that Christ should die for me: I must get a new spring of life. And this life is in Christ Jesus. It neither sins nor dies. It is a holy life. And therefore in virtue of its source it is said, “he that is born of God doth not commit sin.” But this deliverance is as yet but for the inner man. In ourselves (that is, in what is natural to us) we find the very opposite working. Further, “What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son (not, in sinful flesh, but) in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” It is not merely that there was an accumulation of sins, it is the nature—*sin*—that is here in question, and condemned, not forgiven. I do not want any one to forgive my bad nature; I do not forgive it myself. But I want it to be condemned, and myself delivered. And this is exactly the character of the new estate into which I am brought in Christ before God. It is perfect liberty, as far as regards the soul—not merely deliverance from what I have done, but from what I am. Such is the true place belonging to every Christian.

The grave question is, are we in it really and consciously? It is mere self-deception to suppose a man

can be in the struggle of good and evil described in Rom. vii., and at the same time enjoying the liberty of Rom. viii. They cannot go together. They are a contradiction in terms. No man can be at the same time wretched and happy. But he can well say "I thank God," *after* he has been "a wretched man." The law of the Spirit of life does not reign *along with* the law that, when one would do good, evil is present. One may know heaviness through manifold temptations with joy in the Holy Spirit. The state of the world and the people of God drew forth the groans of the Lord Jesus; and we may and ought to have fellowship in His sufferings: but they were not the groans of one who lacked peace with God. Unbroken communion He ever had with the Father. And His peace is ours (John xiv. 27), the purchase of His death and resurrection, and not the groanings of Rom. vii.

And the Christian needs all that God has given him. There is not a word about overcoming—being more than conquerors—till we have come to this. There is neither the groaning nor joy of the Holy Spirit, the intimate working of God in his soul till he is solidly founded on the precious footing where the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ puts him. Are the days evil? So much the more are we exhorted not only to hold fast, but to growth and progress in the truth of God. (Compare 2 Peter and Jude, specially written for the darkest days.) The difficulty is not in the Scripture, but in the natural shrinking of the heart from that which puts the sentence of death on nature in all its forms in ourselves.

Scripture speaks of three classes of persons—natural, carnal, and spiritual. The first is clearly man's unre-

newed state. At conversion a new nature is imparted, and the man is reconciled and brought to God. But every man so reconciled is not spiritual. Many causes may hinder. The spiritual are those who are "not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." But a carnal man is not spiritual, though he be not a natural man—look at the Corinthian saints for example; however grave their faults, they were not said to be natural men, but carnal. Now this is a very humbling truth, and not liked amongst men; because they may no longer be accounted spiritual, if believers may indeed be carnal without being natural men.

Various causes hinder the believer's spirituality. The first is, where he has never learned that there is nothing but evil in the flesh, and that it has been fully judged in the death of Christ. Another hindrance which may operate is fleshly wisdom. Such a value may be given to man's thoughts, such a lowering influence consequently exercised over the spirit by heed to the philosophy of the world in one shape or other, that one in such a state can only be carnal. The spiritual man manifests what he is in Christ, and, instead of cultivating, mortifies what belongs to the flesh. Another danger to which the children of God are exposed is to take all the comfort they can in Christ, while at the same time holding fast all they wish of the world's ease, sharing its pursuits and pleasures, entering into its assemblies, taking part in its senates, sitting on the judicial bench, and exercising authority in every conceivable sphere. These things do the Gentiles seek after. "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." How bright and blessed a

thing it is in such a world as this to see a soul that so values Christ, and his place before God in Him, as to yearn after nothing but His will and glory!

This would be consistency with being "in the Spirit;" which depends on the fact that the Spirit dwells in us, and is not merely acting so as to produce faith. "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." This is characteristic of a Christian. Without His Spirit one is not stamped with this essential character. All that Christ did, He did by the Spirit; so now the Christian, as he lives in the Spirit, is called to walk in the Spirit, manifestly as Christ's here below. "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." When a man is converted, but troubled under law, he has no sense of such a place, and no power to count the body dead. But when he gives all up to God's sentence on the flesh, finding his all in Christ, the Spirit does strengthen him inwardly, and enable him practically to walk according to his new position "in Christ."

And not only this. "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 by (or rather, because of) his Spirit that dwelleth in you." This is the full answer to the wail in Rom. vii. 24. The same Spirit that, now dwelling in me, is the liberty of my soul, is also the divine pledge that my mortal body shall be instinct with the same life. For Christ is raised by the glory of the Father; and, as the righteous award of His infinite work, believers in Him have not only present liberty of soul, but wait in

hope for the quickening of their mortal bodies to be fashioned like his own (Phil. iii. 21). And the Spirit is the seal of the one and the earnest of the other (2 Cor. i. 22). Therefore it is, that, as it is Christ who determines my position before God, we are said to be made the "righteousness of God in Him." Therefore it is too that the Spirit comes down and dwells in us, giving us, on the one hand, all the joy of God in us and the liberty whereby as sons we cry "Abba, Father;" while, on the other hand, He *groans* in us "with groanings that cannot be uttered," not because I am not delivered, but because I am; and I feel the contrariety of my outward man, as well as of all things around us, and my heart looks forward to the day when creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God. We have the liberty of grace for our souls now; by-and-by we shall have the liberty of glory for our mortal bodies also. And it is here we have the blessed place of the Spirit of God, as a personal Spirit distinct from the new nature; while at the same time He gives His name, so to speak, to the condition in which I am now put, as a delivered soul, as a Christian, by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ. Thus it is that I am in the Spirit, and the Spirit dwells in me.—*Abridged, by permission of the author, from "Kelly's Lectures on the Holy Spirit."*

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O joyful day! O glorious hour!  
 When Jesus by Almighty power  
     Revived, and left the grave;  
 In all His work behold Him great,  
 Before, Almighty to create,  
     Almighty now to save.

The first-begotten from the dead,  
 He's risen now, His people's Head,  
     And thus their life's secure;  
 And if, like Him, they yield their breath,  
 Like Him they'll burst the bonds of death,  
     Their resurrection sure.

Why should His people then be sad?  
 None have such reason to be glad  
     As those redeem'd to God;  
 Jesus, the mighty Saviour lives,  
 To them eternal life He gives,  
     The purchase of His blood.

Then let our gladsome praise resound,  
 And let us in His work abound,  
     Whose blessed name is Love;  
 We're sure our labour's not in vain,  
 For we with Him ere long shall reign—  
     With Jesus dwell above.

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