

The Spirit of Truth

Andrew Murray:

'But 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 bear witness of me.'--John 15:26.

'When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the Truth; for He shall not speak from Himself; but whatsoever things He shall hear, these shall He speak.'--John 16:13.

God created man in His image; to become like Himself, capable of holding fellowship with Him in His glory. In Paradise two ways were set before man for attaining to this likeness to God. These were typified by the two trees--that of life, and that of knowledge. God's way was the former, ---through life would come the knowledge and likeness of God; in abiding in God's will, and partaking of God's life, man would be perfected. In recommending the other, Satan assured man that knowledge was the one thing to be desired to make us like God. And when man chose the light of knowledge above the life in obedience, he entered upon the terrible path that leads to death.' The desire to know became his greatest temptation; his whole nature was corrupted, and knowledge was to him more than obedience and more than life.

Under the power of this deceit, that promises happiness in knowledge, the human race is still led astray. And nowhere does it show its power more terribly than in connection with the true religion and God's own revelation of Himself. Even where the word of God is accepted, the wisdom of the world and of the flesh ever enters in; even spiritual Truth is robbed of its power when held, not in the life of the Spirit, but in the wisdom of man. Where Truth enters into the inward parts, as God desires, there it becomes the life of the Spirit. But it may also only reach the outer parts of the soul, the intellect and reason, and while it occupies and pleases there, and satisfies us with the imagination that it will thence exercise its influence, its power is nothing more than that of human argument and wisdom, that never reaches to the true life of the spirit. For there is a truth of the understanding and feelings, which is Only natural, the human image or form, the shadow of Divine Truth. There is a Truth which is substance and reality, communicating to him who holds it the actual possession, the life of the things of which others only think and speak. The truth in shadow, in form, in thought, was all the law could give; and in that the religion of the Jews consisted. The truth of substance, the Truth as a Divine life, was what Jesus brought as the Only-begotten, full of grace and truth. He is Himself 'the Truth.'

In promising the Holy Spirit to His -disciples, our Lord speaks of Him as the Spirit of Truth. That Truth, which He Himself is, that Truth and Grace and Life which He brought from heaven as a substantial spiritual reality to communicate to us, that Truth has its existence in the Spirit of God: He is the Spirit, the inner life of that Divine Truth. And when we receive Him, and just as far as we receive Him, and give up to Him, He makes Christ, and the Life of God, to be Truth in us divinely real; He gives it to be in us of a truth. In His teaching and guiding into the Truth, He does not give us only words and thoughts and images and impressions, coming to us from without, from a book or a teacher outside of us. He enters the secret roots of our life, and plants the Truth of God there as a seed, and dwells in it as a Divine Life. And where, in faith, and expectation, and surrender, this Hidden Life is cherished and nourished, there He quickens and strengthens it, so that it grows stronger and spreads its branches through the whole being. And so, not from without but from within, not in word but in power, in Life and Truth, the Spirit reveals Christ and all He has for us. He makes the Christ, who has been to us so much only an image, a thought, a Saviour outside and above us, to be Truth within us. The Spirit brings with His incoming the Truth into us ; and then, having possessed us from within, guides us, as we can bear it, into all the truth.

In His promise to send the Spirit of Truth from the Father, our Lord very definitely tells us what His principal work would be-- 'He shall bear witness of ME.' He had just before said, 'I am the Truth;' the Spirit of Truth can have no work but just to reveal and impart the fulness of Grace and Truth that there are in Christ Jesus. He came down from the glorified Lord in heaven to bear witness--within us, and so through us, of the reality and the power of the redemption which Christ has accomplished there. There are Christians who are afraid that to think much of the Spirit's presence within us will lead us away from the Saviour above us. A looking within to ourselves may do this; we may be sure that the silent, believing, adoring recognition of the Spirit within us will only lead to a fuller, a more true and spiritual apprehension that Christ alone is indeed all in all. 'He shall bear witness of me.' ' He shall glorify me.' It is He will make our knowledge of Christ Life and Truth, and experience of the Power with which He works and saves.'

To know what the disposition or state of mind is in which we can fully receive this guiding into all Truth, note the remarkable words our Lord uses concerning the Spirit: ' He shall guide you into all the Truth, for He shall not speak from Himself; but whatsoever things He shall hear, these shall He speak.' The mark of this Spirit of

Truth is a wondrous Divine Teachableness. In the mystery of the Holy Trinity there is nothing more beautiful than this, that with a Divine equality on the part of the Son and the Spirit, there is also a perfect subordination. The Son could claim that men should honour Him even as they honoured the Father, and yet counted it no derogation from that honour to say, The Son can do nothing of Himself; as I hear, so I speak. And even so the Spirit of Truth never speaks from Himself. We should think He surely could speak from Himself; but no, only what He hears, that He speaks. The Spirit that fears to speak out of its own, that listens for God to speak, and only speaks when God speaks, this is the Spirit of Truth.

And this is the disposition He works, the life He breathes, in those who truly receive Him---that gentle teachableness which marks the poor in spirit, the broken in heart, who have become conscious that as worthless as their righteousness, is their wisdom, or power of apprehending spiritual truth ; that they need Christ as much for the one as the other, and that the Spirit within them alone can be the Spirit of Truth. He shows us how, even with the word of God in our hands and on our tongues, we may be utterly wanting in that waiting, docile, submissive spirit to which alone its spiritual meaning can be revealed. He opens our eyes to the reason why so much Bible reading, and Bible knowledge, and Bible preaching has so little fruit unto true holiness; because it is studied and held with a wisdom that is not from above, that was not asked for and waited for from God. The mark of the Spirit of Truth was wanting. He speaketh not, He thinketh not from Himself ; what He hears, that He speaks. The Spirit of Truth receives everything day by day, step by step, from God in heaven. He is silent, and does not speak, except and until He hears.

These thoughts suggest to us the great danger of the Christian life-seeking to know the Truth of God in His word without the distinct waiting on the Spirit of Truth in the heart. The tempter of Paradise still moves about among men. Knowledge is still his great temptation. How many Christians there are who could confess that their knowledge of Divine Truth does but little for them: it leaves them powerless against the world and sin; they know little of the light and the liberty, the strength and the joy the Truth was meant to bring. It is because they take to themselves God's truth in the power of human wisdom and human thought, and wait not for the Spirit of Truth to lead 'them into it.' Most earnest efforts to abide in Christ, to walk like Christ, have failed because their faith stood more in the wisdom of man than in the power of God. Most blessed experiences have been short lived, because they knew not that the Spirit of Truth was within them to make Christ and His Holy Presence an abiding reality.

These thoughts suggest the great need of the Christian life. Jesus said, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and follow me.' Many a one follows Jesus without denying himself, And there is nothing that more needs denying than our own wisdom, the energy of the fleshly mind, as it exerts itself in the things of God.

Let us learn that in all our intercourse with God, in His word or prayer, in every act of worship, the first step ought to be a solemn act of abnegation, in which we deny our power to understand God's word, or to speak our words to Him, without the special Divine leading of the Holy Spirit. Christians need to deny even more than their own righteousness, their own wisdom; this is often the most difficult part of the denial of self. In all worship we need to realize the alone sufficiency and the absolute indispensableness, not only of the Blood, but as much of the Spirit of Jesus. This is the meaning of the call to be silent unto God, and in quiet to wait on Him ; to hush the rush of thoughts and words in God's presence, and in deep humility and stillness to wait, and listen, and hear what God will say. The Spirit of Truth never speaks from Himself: what He hears, that He speaks. A lowly, listening, teachable spirit is the mark of the presence of the Spirit of Truth.

And then, when we do wait, let us remember that even then the Spirit of Truth does not at once or first speak in thoughts that we can at once apprehend and express. These are but on the surface. To be true they must be rooted deep. They must have hidden depth in themselves. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth because He is the Spirit of Life: the Life is the Light. Not to thought or feeling does He speak in the first place, but in the hidden man of the heart, in the spirit of a man which is within him, in his inmost parts. It is only to faith that it is revealed what His teaching means, and what His guidance into the Truth. Let our first work therefore today again be to believe ; that is, to recognise the Living God in the work He undertakes to do. Let us believe in the Holy Spirit as the Divine Quickener and Sanctifier, who is already within us, and yield up all to Him. He will prove Himself the Divine Enlightener: the Life is the Light. Let the confession that we have no life or goodness of our own be accompanied by the confession that we have no wisdom either; the deeper our sense of this, the more precious will the promise of the Spirit's guidance become. And the deep assurance of having the Spirit of Truth within us will work in us the holy teacher's likeness, and the quiet hearkening to which the secrets of the Lord shall be revealed.

O Lord God of Truth! in them that worship Thee, Thou seekest Truth in the inward parts. I do bless Thee again that Thou hast given me too the Spirit of Truth, and that He now dwells in me. I bow before Thee in lowly fear to

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ask that I may know Him aright, and walk before Thee in the living consciousness that the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Christ, who is the Truth, is indeed within me, the inmost self of my new life. May every thought and word, every disposition and habit, be the proof that the Spirit of Christ, who is the Truth, dwells and rules within me.

Especially do I ask Thee that He may witness to me of Christ Jesus. May the Truth of His atonement and blood, as it works with living efficacy in the upper sanctuary, dwell in me and I in it. May His Life and Glory no less be Truth in me, a living experience of His Presence and Power. O my Father ! may the Spirit of Thy Son, the Spirit of Truth, indeed be my life. May each word of Thy Son through Him be made true in me.

I do thank Thee once again, O my Father, that He dwelleth within me. I bow my knees that Thou wouldest grant that, according to the riches of Thy glory, He may work mightily in me and all Thy saints. Oh, that all Thy people may know this their privilege and rejoice in it: the Holy Spirit within them to reveal Christ, full of Grace and Truth, as Truth in them. Amen.