

**Articles and Sermons :: The Spirit Of Faith ~ Poul Madsen****The Spirit Of Faith ~ Poul Madsen - posted by crsschk (), on: 2007/6/28 9:02**

THE SPIRIT OF FAITH

"I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, All men are liars" (Psalm 116:10, 11).

"We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you" (2 Corinthians 4:13-14).

PAUL'S situation was extremely difficult. He felt weak in body; he was pressed even beyond measure. There were many enemies and trouble on every side, but he had one thing which made the outcome of that difficult situation quite different from what could have been expected. He had, as he says, "the spirit of faith", which means the spirit of reality, of *real* reality. I shall come back to that later.

He goes on to say: "according as it is written", and this is one of his favourite expressions. You find it in 1 Corinthians 15:3 and 4, where it says: "Christ died for our sins *according to the Scriptures*; and that he was buried, and that he rose again in the third day *according to the Scriptures*." What does that mean? It means that it was according to the fixed, eternal will of God. It is something that is real because God decided from eternity that this should be, and when Paul says here that we have the "same spirit of faith, according as it is written", he is relating himself and his present situation to the eternal, fixed will and plan of God. His situation is no accident, and Paul considers it in the light of this real reality. He is saying: 'God has a plan and I am connected with that plan. God moves through history according to the Scriptures and now I, in some mystical way, am connected with God's movements through history. God is fulfilling His plan. I am in difficulties but God is moving and I am with Him. I have the spirit of faith, faith according to the Scriptures, according to what God has planned from eternity.' As we have this same spirit of faith, we are allowed to quote the Scripture which was in Paul's mind. He does not quote it himself, but we read it: "All men are liars" (Psalm 116:10-11). This is according to the Scriptures and it is reality -- *all men are liars*.

It means this: All men's ideas about Paul and his situation were lies. All that they thought, said and planned about Paul in his difficulty was a lie. Perhaps they said: 'Poor Paul!', but that would have been a lie, because he was not poor at all. They might have said: 'This is a hopeless situation!' That would have been a lie, because the situation was not hopeless. They might have said: 'Paul's work has led to nothing!' That would have been a lie. They might have said: 'May we come and comfort you, Paul?', and their comfort would have been a lie. They might have come and said some positive things to cheer him, but that also would have been a lie. All that comes from men -- their ideas, their plans, their words -- is an illusion. It is in darkness, without any connection with reality, and therefore it is all lies.

Paul has the spirit of faith and therefore he throws all these lies off from himself, that is, he throws off men's way of thinking about his situation, and the human way of commenting upon the situation. He throws all this off and stands in the spirit of faith in close connection with reality, with God. He says: "*knowing*", and when people speak of knowing, then you feel that they are speaking of reality.

What does Paul know? He knows that God raised Jesus! That means everything to Paul. When he says that God raised Jesus, I know that many -- perhaps you among them -- would say that that cannot be proved and it is only a matter of faith. That is true. It cannot be proved in this world. Why not? Because it is so real, and in the world of lies and illusions that which is really real cannot be proved. The reason why it cannot be proved is that it is the truth. As I said, this world is in darkness and all the ideas of men are illusions. In such a world only illusions can be proved. Reality and truth cannot be proved, and the life of faith is the life of reality. It needs no proofs and it cannot be proved. It is the same with truth. Truth has no entrance into the world of illusions. Jesus said: 'Because I speak the truth you do not believe it.' He did not say: 'In spite of my speaking the truth you will not believe.' Truth and reality cannot fit into the ideas of men, but if we have the spirit of truth, we are in contact with eternal, real reality, and that is victory. "This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith."

Paul was in difficulties and disappointments, weak in himself, and he had many enemies, but in the midst of it all he was kept quiet, confident and strong, because all that he was outwardly was not the real thing. The real thing was: 'I know Him who raised Jesus from the dead. I am one with Him and therefore nothing can spoil me, for He will also raise me. Nothing can harm me. My enemies cannot, disappointments cannot, seeming failures cannot, bodily weakness cannot, death cannot and Satan cannot. Nothing can, because I am one with Him who raised Jesus from the dead.'

He goes on further. Not only does he say that nothing can harm him, but also that nothing can spoil his work: "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus ... shall present us *with you*." And "you" means his work. To the Corinthians he said: 'You are the seed of my apostleship, whether you know it or not, whether you acknowledge it or not, whether you are with me now or not. I have worked in the name of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead and nothing can spoil that work, because I know the One who is raised.'

Do you say that? I would be very surprised if there were not quite a number of difficulties represented among you, personal difficulties, difficulties in work, difficulties in the Church, or difficulties with other Christians. Are you in contact with a risen Saviour? Do you have this spirit of faith which says: 'As it is written'? Do you feel and know yourself just now in contact with the movements of God through the history of men? If you do, nothing can defeat you. You are not proud and you are not strong in yourself, but nothing can defeat you. Perhaps you have no difficulties now, but I should be very surprised if you do not have some at least in future days. We have, in these days, been reminded of the importance of not fighting our circumstances, but trying to understand their meaning and purpose. I take up this thread and advise you not to speak as a liar. Do not say a word until you can speak in the spirit of faith. If you learn that lesson, you will be able to go on with Paul on a triumphant note. We all know his glorious words: "All things work together for good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28), but that is not enough. All things must also work together for good for those among whom we work. It would not be enough if we ourselves came through triumphantly, but our work was spoiled. Therefore Paul says: "All things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God" (2 Corinthians 4:15). This is a triumphant note, and something far bigger than we are accustomed to. I myself would feel very sorry if some day I had to say: 'All things worked together for good to *me*, but my work was spoiled. The enemy was triumphant there and the difficulties were too great.' 'No!' says Paul, 'Never!'

The emphasis of the so-called 'Holiness' teaching is that the goal of everything is personal holiness, coming through yourself, but that is only half a truth. I do not want to come through by myself only. I want my work to come through also! Satanic opposition and death in our own bodies will never spoil our work, provided we are in contact with reality. What is reality? It is God, and He never suffers a defeat. He uses all His enemies; they run His errands and they are His servants. Having the same spirit of faith, we are connected to the living God, to His eternal plan and to His strong purpose; and therefore all things work together for good to us. 'It all happens for your sakes that the thanksgiving might redound to the glory of God.'

But this is not enough for Paul. He has the spirit of faith and goes on to say (in verse 17): "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Not only do we ourselves come through and not only is our work being brought through, but through eternities all our difficulties have accomplished a very real weight of exceeding great glory. Can that be proved? Not in the world of illusions! There you will fight your difficulties and try to get rid of them, but in the world of reality where God reigns and where the spirit of faith prevails, it can be proved.

Paul has been speaking of his very heavy difficulties which in chapter 1 were too great for him and he could not carry them. Now he calls them 'light' and says they are 'but for a moment'; and yet they had lasted all his life! What has happened? He is in contact with God and is just filled with the spirit of faith, so that he now speaks a language which anyone without that spirit cannot use.

I think I may already have told you about my great friend, Pastor Fjord Christensen in Denmark. A lady once came to him and said: 'My sufferings and afflictions are so heavy and they have lasted for so many years.' He only replied: 'Have you become a liberal theologian? The Bible says that afflictions are light and only last for a moment.' She spoke as a liar, but he spoke as a man of faith. Which of them was speaking the truth? He was and the lady accepted it. The truth made her free and she was brought back into contact with reality.

This is the victory! This is just the other side of the Word of the Cross. We accept everything without fighting it and turn it, through the spirit of faith, into something of real value for ourselves, for those among whom we work and for eternity. That is a wonderful thing! That makes life much more interesting and gives us a completely different note when we speak,

when we pray and when we sing. That is the Gospel, a message of real joy, not illusionary joy, but *real* joy. That means lasting joy, joy that cannot be taken away because it is founded on God Himself and therefore is strong, masculine and real. And that joy is for us.

But we must come out of the world of illusions and lies. We cannot remain in our own way of thinking and speaking. If you read one of the famous books of history, such as Toynbee's *History of Mankind*, you will never find the most real event in the history of mankind mentioned there. The most real thing, and the thing of most value, was the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but the historians never write about it. They write about the Greeks, the Persians, the Romans, and the British, but they never write about the resurrection of the Lord. Why not? Because this real thing does not fit into their philosophy and their way of thinking.

What I have said does not fit into our way of thinking as natural men and women. It does not fit into our feelings and emotions, nor into our philosophy of life. The only way to accept this word of God is to get out of our way of thinking and out of our philosophy of life. We cannot harmonize these two ways of thinking and speaking. Because it is truth and because it is real, it cannot be accepted by the natural man. We have to have a new conversion and really turn away from our way of thinking, speaking, feeling, advising and comforting one another, and get to terms with the Lord, having a fresh encounter with Him who is real. We have to refresh our spirits with the spirit of faith. Then a new light is thrown upon everything and we can smile and laugh where we used to weep.

Perhaps you will say: 'I am so weak, so small and so weighed down!' My answer to that is: 'Never forget that the greater the importance and the more far-reaching the work is to which the Lord has called you, the lesser and smaller and weaker the vessel must of necessity be.' The weaker and smaller and lesser the vessel, the greater is the knowledge of reality, the knowledge of the spirit of faith and the knowledge of Him who raised Jesus from the dead. Such a vessel can speak the word of faith which names 'the things which are not' as if they were. That word is creative; it creates light out of darkness, hope out of fear, and victory out of what might seem to be a defeat.

This is life in the Spirit. It is the life of faith which the Lord has bought and given to us. - P. M.

Switzerland, 1970

(<http://www.austin-sparks.net>) <http://www.austin-sparks.net>

Re: The Spirit Of Faith ~ Poul Madsen - posted by crsschk (), on: 2007/6/28 15:55

The Well Within

by T. Austin-Sparks

"The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up into eternal life." (John 4:14)

"And Isaac digged again the well of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them up..." (Genesis 26:18)

The Word makes it clear that from the Lord's side the life of the Holy Spirit, with all its up-welling and outflowing, should be a spontaneous thing. On God's side there are no difficulties. So far as He is concerned there is nothing more to be done to make possible the reality of the well within. The very fact that when the Lord Jesus ascended to glory in the power of a completed and perfected work, the Holy Spirit spontaneously came down from heaven, is proof that from God's side there was nothing remaining to be done to effect that release. The Lord had made full provision. On the other hand, though, such a spontaneity of up-welling and outflowing of the waters of the Spirit is not as general among Christians as it should be. It is our intention to seek some explanation of this limitation.

The well is there; the spring is provided. If we have believed into Christ and truly belong to Him, then His Spirit is present as the well within. There can be no doubt about this if we are true believers. But we may have seen a swampy patch, with all the evidences of water but no freshness or flow, and have discovered that although a spring existed, its water was interrupted by some stone or obstacle which hindered its flow. This can happen in human life. The spring of the Spirit may be present, but with various obstructions lying heavily upon it, preventing the outflow in a definite course.

Abraham was noted for the wells which he dug. He was a man of faith, and faith always digs wells. The Philistines, however, blocked them up with rubbish after he died, so that his son, Isaac, had to unstop them. Isaac speaks of the power of a risen life in union with heaven, and this gives a good indication of the meaning of the opened wells. The Old Testament type finds its fulfilment in the Lord Jesus, the greater Isaac who, in the power of His resurrection, ascension and heavenly life, has opened up anew those fountains of the Spirit which had been blocked and choked by many things which were contrary to the will of God. The wells are opened in His resurrection. The Spirit is now freely given. But we have to see that no obstacles are allowed to hinder the flow. Perhaps it will help us to do so, if we consider a few of the hindrances which need to be removed if the well within is to be unstopped and the water allowed to flow freely.

HINDRANCES IN THE REALM OF THE MIND

Firstly, there are hindrances in the realm of the mind. We have been told that man is quite unable to cope mentally with the spiritual and heavenly things of God. For this reason God has provided the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth, of revelation and of spiritual knowledge. So there will obviously be hindrances to the free flow of the Spirit if we try to reason things out for ourselves instead of heeding the Spirit-inspired Scriptures. If we try to think things through ourselves, we become involved in all sorts of problems and questions. We are specifically told that: "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God... he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged" (1 Corinthians 2:14), a fact which needs to be accepted and remembered by Christians for themselves, as well as for the world around. There will always arise moments of crisis or experiences full of perplexity and seeming contradiction, for which the only answer is that we must trust God. If we resolve that we will reason the matter out, or if we turn to other men for their explanations, we will never understand the ways of God. His Word is our only source of light. It will, at times, be hard to understand. It will, perhaps, be difficult or even impossible to explain. But if we heed its message we will be delivered from man's foolish reasoning, and we will have lifted off a load of rubbish which was blocking up the well within.

There are bound to be matters which defy analysis or argument, for the ways of God are past finding out. The real test is whether we will trust God when we cannot fathom His ways; whether we will deliberately and positively take up a position of faith reliance on His faithfulness. Even that may not provide us with an answer which satisfies our minds and solves all our intellectual problems, but it will bring us that blessed peace which is promised to those whose minds are stayed on the Lord. This is just the opposite of the mind of the man who is stayed on himself and his difficulty. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3). It does not say that his heart will be at peace because he knows the answers to all the questions. No! The basic thing is a faith attitude towards God's faithfulness. To act in this way is to remove a big stone, and I venture to say that it will clear the way for a new joy, and a new peace and a new strength. The Holy Spirit has been pent up, blocked, hindered, arrested, by incessant reasoning of the natural mind. He is released by the simple exercise of a faith which feeds on God's Word and relies on His faithfulness.

HINDRANCES IN THE REALM OF THE HEART

There is another possible realm of hindrances to the up-welling of the Spirit, and this is the realm of the heart. The Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of love. If there is coldness towards the Lord, a lack of true devotion to Him, then this is like a heavy stone which makes the life more like a quagmire than a fresh spring. Any reserve which we have, not in the knowing of God's will but in the willingness to do it, will inevitably stem the flow of the Spirit's power. It is always the work of God's enemy to clog up our lives by introducing love of self or love of the world, and it needs ruthless determination to remove the accumulated rubbish and re-dig the well in purity of devotion to Christ.

It may well be, though, that the hindrances arise from lack of love to our fellow believers. We must remember that the Holy Spirit can never have free course in us and through us if we harbour unloving thoughts concerning other of God's children, let alone put those thoughts into actions. He is the Spirit of fellowship, so that if we fail in that realm then we fail in the matter of love. It is so easy to allow unworthy considerations to quench brotherly love, to be clogged up with resentment or to be wrongly influenced by our susceptibilities or hurt feelings. What is more, we find it the easiest thing in the world to say or hear unkind things about others, things which put them in a bad light and somehow make us feel self-righteous. We must not dismiss such matters as unimportant, for although they may seem small in themselves, they become the deposits which unite to clog up the well of the Spirit.

This matter of personal relationships is one in which we have to set ourselves definitely to digging out the earthiness which stops up the wells of the Spirit. We must refuse to speak and refuse to listen to those critical accounts of other believers which would grieve them if they heard and do grieve the Spirit who is always present and who always hears. More th

an that, we have to be active in positive cultivation of fellowship. To some it is quite natural to be independent. For them deference to others represents a major difficulty. Sometimes they may deliberately ignore or despise others, but sometimes they just prefer to do it alone and never seriously think of inter-relatedness and inter-dependence.

The Word of God, however, is most explicit in ordering us to esteem one another, to submit to one another and to live and work together. The Holy Spirit demands that the people of God live according to a team order of things, that they should be governed by a family spirit. Anything which is of an isolated or detached nature, which fails to recognise and fully accept the family thought of God, is a check on Him. By failing to observe fellowship we quench the Spirit. It is not only a matter of avoiding giving offence but of active pursuit of fellowship. Some may be wondering why there is so little upspringing from the inner well, when they are sitting back in a wrong kind of modesty, failing to bring in their own personal contribution to fellowship life and ministry. Unkindness is not the only obstacle in this realm. Shyness and diffidence can equally rest like a stone on the flow of life. The only thing to do is to dig it up and move it away. Get in, get right in, and let yourself go! Do not always choose the back seat because you like to be left alone, but come forward in the Lord's name and give the Holy Spirit a free course in your lives. He is well able to check you if you become too self-assertive, but there is little He can do if your well is all stopped up with fears and inhibitions.

HINDRANCES IN THE REALM OF DAILY LIVING

There is one more area of life in which this hindering work may be found, and that is that the flow of the Spirit may be checked by inconsistencies in the daily life. The question which constantly faces us is whether or not we want to know the free flow from the well within. Do we want that springing up of living water, of which the Lord Jesus spoke? Do we want that, as He promised, rivers of living water shall flow out from our inner life? If we do, then we must always give serious consideration to anything which may serve as a blockage. Any disobedience, yes, any reservation in obedience, from our side will be sure to hinder the flow from God's side, acting as a deterrent to the Holy Spirit in our lives. We can never know the well springing up and the river flowing out if at any point where God has revealed His will, we fail in the matter of obedience.

This well is choked by disobedience to the known will of God. It is choked and blocked by inconsistency of walk. The Lord wants more than mental agreement with His Word; He expects to see it working out in practical terms. He is concerned with how we spend our time, how we manage our financial affairs, how we behave both alone and before others. He watches us in the home and at our work, as well as in our fellowship activities, always looking for a walk worthy of the gospel which we believe and preach. Not that He desires us to have a narrow life. Far from it! The Spirit has come to bring enrichment and fulfilment to us. God's command to us, though, is that we must not quench the Spirit nor must we grieve Him; in other words that we do not allow any rocks, stones or rubbish to accumulate as a hindrance to the springing-up well. We need to watch the practical expression of our daily life and so avoid a quagmire of suppression, whereas God provides for a well of water springing up into eternal life.

From "Toward the Mark" July-August 1976.

Re: THE FINGER OF GOD - posted by crsschk (), on: 2007/7/2 9:11

Switzerland, 1970

THE FINGER OF GOD

"All the wells which Isaac's father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth. And Abimilech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we. And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there. And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham, and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them. And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of living water. And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek; because they strove with him" (Genesis 26:15-20).

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

LAST time we were seeing that God is a Person, the face behind the universe. Now we are going to see that God also has a finger which He puts into the universe. He does things by 'the hand of the Lord', or, as the Lord Jesus calls it, by the 'Spirit of God'.

We also saw that the earth stands in relation to God as a book does to its author, so that as we read the book we either see nothing of God, or we see something of Him on every page; and when we look at the universe we either see nothing of God, or we find Him very difficult to avoid, because He is the Author. However, we must remember that He has a very special chapter in that book. The Author became one of the characters, for there is a chapter which is about the Lord Jesus, when God interfered with the story and played the part of one of the characters. One thing about the mystery of the Godhead is that God is a part of the book as well as the writer of it. God did this in order to speak to us -- "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" -- so that all God had to say to us was seen in the Lord Jesus.

I want you to imagine for a moment that you have never opened the Bible in your life, nor have you heard the Christian message, but you believe that there is a God who made the heavens and the earth. Now, that God wants to speak to you. That is reasonable enough, but how would He do it? How will the Author speak to the characters of His story? Perhaps He could put words in the mouths of some of the characters, and this He has done with the Prophets. But a Prophet might be giving his own opinion, so perhaps God would speak to you with a vision, a dream, or a revelation. However, most of us, I think, would go to a psychiatrist if God spoke to us in a dream, for we would not be too sure that it was He who had spoken. Perhaps God would speak to you by the touch of His Spirit upon your spirit. He does that, when He makes us hungry for His beauty, when He makes us feel empty without Him, and when we long for love and for peace. But these may be just the movements of the chemicals in our bodies. How can you be sure that God has spoken to you? Perhaps He will speak through your conscience. He does do that, for the conscience is one of His instruments and makes us aware that He is near. But, then, some have weak consciences and others have strong, and all our consciences are affected by sin, so we differ in our judgments. How could God speak in an irrefutable way?

Well, of course, you have not opened your Bible yet! There is only one way in which God could speak to man so that man could understand, and that is if God Himself became a man and spoke man's language, lived with man's heart, thought with man's brain, worked with man's hands and walked with man's feet. That would be your language, and you could understand that word. God's message would be coming on your wavelength. It would be no good if He became an animal, or a tree. All that God has to say to us has to become a man so that we can really understand -- and that is who the Lord Jesus is.

Of course, if God were to do this -- and we Christians say that He has done it -- it would be surprising if He did not prepare the way, so, through the Prophets, through His law given by Moses, through dreams and visions and the prickings of the consciences of the wise, He has brought together a training programme. That is the Old Testament, and in it you find the people who were trained. They were the people of Israel, so that when the Lord Jesus came there was meant to be a people ready to interpret who this Man was, a people who could understand more perfectly the message that God was speaking so that it could be carried to the furthest parts of the world. We Christians say that God has done that.

Now Socrates stated that if a perfect man came to this world, he would be executed, and we know that man's biggest disease is always to throw God out. So it would not be surprising, in fact, we would expect that if God were to speak to us in a man, we would execute that man. So Jesus died. But God must have something to say to us about death, for, after all, that is man's biggest problem. Therefore we would expect this man to rise again, for God is speaking to us about our biggest problem when He comes to speak to us in this man. So Christ rose again.

You might have thought about all that without opening the Bible, if you started with the assumption that God wants to say something to man. The picture is reasonable, not difficult to work out, and it is what you would expect to happen -- and it did happen, and the Spirit of God helps us to see that it happened in Jesus.

Then comes a surprising thing, and something that I do not think you would ever have thought of. You would realize that God would want the message to go through the world, so you would expect it to be put down in a book. It was, in the New Testament, but God has done something even more than that. So that this message of Jesus, God's Word to man, might spread into every generation of this earth, invade every country of this world, be understood in every culture that exists and be seen in every colour of skin that there is, God has taken the Spirit of that message and has poured that message

ge into His people. The Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jesus, living in every Christian, begins to write the story all over again, as we have been considering in our morning sessions.

The Spirit of God, writing on the spirit of our inner man, does not start with us in Bethlehem, when we are born again. He does not write out the compassion of the Lord Jesus towards those who were leprous, or who were in sin, but writes out Christ as we visit a sickbed, or as we help a person in need. The Spirit of God does not write 'Golgotha' across our spirit, but writes of the place where there was a crisis in our heart before God and we found that we were crucified with Him, and then began to discover the power of resurrection. The story of the Lord Jesus, God's message to man, is being written out many times in many Christians, so that His message might go throughout the whole world. We do not have to travel back two thousand years. We do not have to go to Galilee. God's Word is being breathed out of men's lives, so that the whole world can know what He has to say.

This is the finger of God writing the story in your spirit, the Spirit of God reproducing the life of the Lord Jesus in your life, so that all the world might see and understand, and know. God is still speaking to man in man's language.

Now, we all know that so much of the Christianity that we meet, and that we live with, seems to lack that vital touch of God's Spirit. It has not the same freshness that there is in the story of Jesus. It is not springing and bubbling up like the life of Christ across the pages of the Gospels. It does not attract by being something satisfying, but appears to be dry. How can our Christianity be living Christianity? How can our dry experience become vibrant and fresh? Have we somehow reached the experience of Genesis 26 where, if you remember, the wells that Abraham had dug had been filled up with earth and life was no longer springing forth from them? We were reminded this morning that Isaac teaches us about resurrection, and he does so, not only in his experience on Mount Moriah, but all the way through his life. There was a resurrection spirit when he touched those dried-up wells that his father had dug, for those wells re-lived. The Spirit of God began to flow again. I want, therefore, that we should think about Isaac in order to get a clue as to how our Christian experience can go on living in the vibrant, refreshing life of the Holy Spirit.

First of all, I want to point out three things.

Isaac had an experience of resurrection on the top of Mount Moriah. This was an historical fact, an event written in his history which could not be altered. And that is true of one aspect of Christianity, for it is something factual, something that happened two thousand years ago. God became man, dwelt amongst us, died on a Cross, and rose again. Those are things that happened, and they cannot be altered.

Then in Genesis 25:11 we read that Isaac dwelt by the well Lahai-roi. That was where he was meant to live and experience continuously the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit, for by this time he had come to understand that resurrection was God's interpretation of that event on Mount Moriah. And that is the second thing about Christianity. Not only is it an event in history, but it is an event which has been interpreted to us. God gives us an understanding of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ through the Scriptures.

The third thing is that these facts -- what happened as an event and what is understood from the Scriptures -- have to be made our continual experience by the Holy Spirit. Christianity is not just facts; it is more than that. It is not just facts interpreted, preached and explained; it is more than that. Christianity is the facts interpreted and applied in a living twentieth-century way to twentieth-century people, and these facts are being written all over again in your heart and mine by the Spirit of God.

I wonder if this is an explanation of why our Christian lives are so dry! We concentrate on all the facts. We can explain the Christian message very reasonably and rationally. We can demonstrate the evidence for the resurrection of our Lord Jesus. We are very good at explaining the 'Gospel', but that is not the whole thing and has not reached the end to which God is aiming. We think we need more Bible Study, and so we get a lot more teaching, interpretation, but we still are not really alive or fresh. If we are quite honest, as time goes on we begin to get a little bored, even a little tired of the Bible, for we have heard too many doctrines, and yet, somehow, we are not alive to God. We have to get those wells unearthed!

RELATIONSHIPS

I wonder why Isaac began to experience famine in his life when he was living by the well Lahai-roi! That is the well of the

God who lives and sees, who was there in order to be continuously bringing to Isaac that fact of the resurrection that he had experienced on Mount Moriah, and to explain and interpret that experience in his daily life. But Isaac began to be hungry and dissatisfied. There was a famine in the land (Genesis 26:1), and Isaac wanted to find some answer to this lack of food and water.

Now I am going to speculate. It does not say in the Bible that this is the reason, but I wonder if the famine began in his experience because of something in his history. Just to help you to come along with me in this speculation, I want to point out that, although there was still famine in the rest of the country, when Isaac was back in a right place with God he had plenty of water and good crops. So perhaps there was a reason why he lost that experience of the living, seeing God.

Isaac and his wife were for some while without children, so in Genesis 25:21 we read: "And Isaac intreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren: and the Lord was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived." That is good! Isaac must be living by the well, for that is resurrection. Then we read that Rebekah found that the children were struggling within her, so she sought the Lord as well, but on her own, and she had a revelation. The Lord told her that she had twins, but they were struggling because the nation of the elder would be serving the nation of the younger. From that Rebekah understood that God had chosen the younger of the twins, but Isaac would not believe it. In verse 28 we read that "Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob." I think I can see some earth dropping down into the well Lahai-roi! Perhaps things were not quite as they should have been at home. I am sure Isaac must have said to himself: 'Why does that wife of mine keep on about the younger son? It is the first born that matters ... Now, listen, my dear. That elder boy is the one that matters. It was my prayers that brought those boys into being.' And she would have replied: 'No, you have it all wrong. I had a vision from God and it is the younger boy.' 'Oh, women's tales! They expect us to believe any old dream!' All this could have been saved if they had prayed together, and if there had been a common spiritual life. It is all very well to talk about our unity as believers when two believers in the same home are not sharing the same spiritual life!

I once met a man who separated himself from every company of Christians with whom he had met, and now he breaks bread every Sunday morning with his wife -- and I am not too sure about the spiritual unity there! That is not the Spirit of God, for He is the unity of God's people. If we want to stop that work of the Spirit we start dropping some earth down the well -- not very muddy or dirty earth, and not too much rubbish, but just good, honest earth -- and the Spirit of God is repressed in our hearts.

I will tell you why I think my speculation may be right. The time came when Isaac said to Abimelech, the Philistine king: 'Rebekah is my sister.' Isaac had not told the truth because "he feared". Ladies, if your husband did that, you should conclude that he was not the world's greatest lover! Indeed, it would be a very wrong thing to do, for it would be exposing you to danger. It was expedient, true enough, and Isaac had learnt this trick from his father Abraham, but that in no way exonerated him and when God brought it out into the open so that it could be dealt with (and that is the terrible thing about the God of resurrection! He will bring things out into the open eventually if we will not bring them out, and it is sometimes to our shame and humiliation to have to admit to Him that things are not right in our home and in our hearts), and it was dealt with, Isaac's crops began to grow. The Philistines did not have good crops. They still had the problem of famine, which is not surprising, for they were the ones who had filled up the wells which Abraham had dug. They had gone around with a lot of earth and had dropped it into the wells so that they could not spring up. How did they do it, and what did it mean?

Who are these Philistines? They always bring famine to the land because they are the sort of people who live in God's things, but do not know the living experience of His Word. They come into Canaan by their own route and are not led, as were the children of Israel into Egypt, and Abraham from Ur. They have no exercises in the wilderness, know no crossing of the Jordan, but come along the coast. They hate God's Word to be sharp -- when they were in control of the children of Israel they would not allow them to sharpen their swords. They like the truth of the ark and keep it in their temple so that they can bring it out at special times, like an Armistice Day parade. They are the sort of people who make a lot of men, especially big men -- and Goliath was one of their biggest. The Philistines are people who handle the things of God -- but God is not handling them. That finger of the Lord is not able to spring in their life and write a story. What was it they dropped down the wells to keep the Spirit of God at bay? Again, can I suggest this? I do not think it was rubbish, nor was it dirty, but just earth -- and earth is important. If there is no earth there is no well, for there must be something round the hole so that the water can come up the hole, but the earth that the Philistines put into the wells was earth in the wrong place. There must be earth in a well, and we must have the historical facts of Christianity. We have to have the earth of facts that happened on the earth in the earthly body of the Lord Jesus. We must have the earth of doctrines, formulations of truth, and interpretations that come through the mind, but that, too, is the earth. It goes through a brain which is earthly.

Now put the earth in the right place. It goes at the bottom of the well and up the sides, but not right in the middle where there has to be a hole. There is nothing earthly there! There is a spirit there, with our body of earth around it. There must be earth in order to have human beings; there had to be earth for the body of the Lord Jesus, and for the Prophets to be able to speak and for the Scriptures to be written; but there is the unseen Spirit of God who writes on our hearts and who springs up in everlasting life whenever we make room for Him in our spirits.

CONTENTION

Isaac helps us to see how to keep the hole clear. The Philistines tell him to leave, so he moves on and digs out one of Abraham's wells that the Philistines had stopped up. Isaac knows the secret now! In his own family life he has learnt to pray together and to be in unity. Do you think it is only by chance that we read in Ephesians v: "Be filled with the Spirit ... wives, submit to your husbands ... husbands, love your wives"? That is one of the ways to keep the hole open to the Spirit of God! God has put His finger on something in the earth, so Isaac digs out the earth. Then the Spirit of God begins to flow and Isaac is refreshed. No doubt rivers of living water flow out of Isaac's life, so it is not very long before the theologians -- I mean, the Philistines -- arrive, and they want to know what is going on. They see there is something that they have not got, so they try to take it over, and say: "The water is ours." Is that not terrible? 'The Spirit of God is ours! He belongs to us, not to you. We are the spiritual people.' Sometimes this is expressed by just a look on the face, or in a word, but if this is our attitude towards the Spirit of God it can easily be seen. 'God's Spirit belongs exclusively to us. We are first-class, and you are second-class.'

Is it not beautiful that Isaac just moved on? 'I am only too pleased that you want the things of the Spirit! We are not going to fight about it.' He called that well 'Contention', and then left it.

As I pointed out, in Ephesians v it says: "Be filled with the Spirit." How? "Submitting yourselves one to another." We will not be filled with the Spirit if we are contentious, if we are disputing and arguing with one another about the Spirit, or if we are claiming Him for our personal possession and not wanting anyone else to have Him. That contention represses the flow of the Spirit of God.

HATRED

So Isaac moves on and digs another well, and out flows the Spirit again. Once more the Philistines are interested, and that is not surprising, for they have been thirsty for a long time. So they claim the well. Isaac called this one 'Hatred', because of the anger and the opposition which had arisen by reason of his spiritual experience and blessing. Perhaps he decided that if he stayed there he would not be able to give thanks to God. How can you if you are arguing, and when you are in conflict with, and hating, others? But if we would be filled with the Spirit we must 'give thanks always for all things unto God'.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Isaac moves on and digs a third well. He called this one "Rehoboth", and said: 'We shall be fruitful now.' He knew that the Spirit of God was given to bring forth fruit: "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self-control." This time the Philistines did not come, for they are not interested in the fruit that the Spirit brings forth. They are only interested in the Spirit Himself. They kept the other two wells, and this is the terrible thing: God lets us keep the Spirit's workings even if we are not interested in the fruit of the Spirit. Balaam had visions in the Spirit, Samson did mighty exploits in the Spirit, Saul prophesied in the Spirit even while he was chasing David with hatred, Judas did all the works of the Spirit (or the other disciples would soon have found him out), men and women may demonstrate miracles and prophesy in the Spirit -- and the Lord Jesus will say: 'Depart from Me! I never knew you.' The workings of the Spirit are dangerous, not because of what they are in themselves. They may be necessary for the work of God, but they are dangerous because we deceive ourselves with them. We claim a unique experience of the Spirit ourselves: 'This water is ours!' We are not interested in the fruit, but only in the sayings and manifestations. God allows that, and we delude ourselves as to our spirituality. Spirituality can never be understood by the manifestations. You might be very spiritual, or you might h

ave no spirituality, but God will let you have the workings of the Spirit. The Philistines could take those workings for themselves, but it was in Rehoboth that the fruit was brought forth.

THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

There is one more well. King Abimelech came to Isaac and said: 'I can see now that God is with you. Come, now, let us make a covenant!' and they did. On that day water sprang out of the well of Shebah -- "Beer-sheba", which is the well of the oath. As they were there together the Spirit of God was flowing forth. Is there ever a place to separate on these sort of issues? I suppose that if we are pushed out, as Isaac was, we have to go, but God's heart is towards all His people, even the Philistines, the theologians. They can see that Isaac has what they need. Our unity is the unity of the Spirit, and the Spirit is for all those who belong to the Lord. There is never an exclusive movement of the Spirit of God. I believe that when the Lord Jesus prayed: 'That they also may be one in us, that the world may believe', it was partly for this purpose -- that when we express our unity in the Spirit, the Spirit of God can flow out to the world and all men can see that God is with us.

Is the Spirit of God writing the story of Jesus in our hearts? Or are we still content with facts and theologies? Here are the clues: right relationships, especially in the home, giving thanks in all things, submitting to one another, and, added to all that, praising God, as Isaac did in that third well, when he said: 'Now, thank God, we can bring forth the fruit!', for they were free. Spirit-filled men will go out to all God's people, and, on the basis of the unity of the Spirit, God will go out to all the world. - R. T. F.

Re: The Spirit Of Faith ~ Poul Madsen - posted by InTheLight (), on: 2007/7/2 12:46

Excellent article from Mr Madsen. I don't know much about him other than he ministered with T.A. Sparks at times. But my, what depth of understanding and wisdom this man had. He did a commentary on Romans that is quite good.

Quote:
-----I think I may already have told you about my great friend, Pastor Fjord Christensen in Denmark. A lady once came to him and said: 'My sufferings and afflictions are so heavy and they have lasted for so many years.' He only replied: 'Have you become a liberal theologian? The Bible says that afflictions are light and only last for a moment.' She spoke as a liar, but he spoke as a man of faith. Which of them was speaking the truth? He was and the lady accepted it. The truth made her free and she was brought back into contact with reality.

This is challenging. How many times have we offered worldly advice in such a situation when the truth was the only way to make them free? I think that sometimes we avoid the hard truth simply to spare our own selves the possibility of being misunderstood or because of some so-called "comfort zone" that we dare not pass, so instead we offer something that is ultimately a lie. Lord deliver us from superficial binding of wounds.

In Christ,

Ron

Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2007/7/2 14:51

Quote:

because all that he was outwardly was not the real thing. The real thing was: 'I know Him who raised Jesus from the dead. I am one with Him and therefore nothing can spoil me, for He will also raise me. Nothing can harm me. My enemies cannot, disappointments cannot, seeming failures cannot, bodily weakness cannot, death cannot and Satan cannot. Nothing can, because I am one with Him who raised Jesus from the dead.'

Re: The Spirit of Faith - posted by crsschk (), on: 2007/7/2 15:42

Quote:
-----Excellent article from Mr Madsen. I don't know much about him other than he ministered with T.A. Sparks at times. But my, what depth of understanding and wisdom this man had. He did a commentary on Romans that is quite good.

Would love to read that. Similar here brother, only know of him by Sparks as well.

That quote ... it grabbed me as well;

Quote:
-----This is challenging. How many times have we offered worldly advice in such a situation when the truth was the only way to make them free? I think that sometimes we avoid the hard truth simply to spare our own selves the possibility of being misunderstood or because of some so-called "comfort zone" that we dare not pass, so instead we offer something that is ultimately a lie. Lord deliver us from superficial binding of wounds.

Amen.

Quote:
-----Isaac moves on and digs a third well. He called this one "Rehoboth", and said: 'We shall be fruitful now.' He knew that the Spirit of God was given to bring forth fruit: "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self-control." This time the Philistines did not come, for they are not interested in the fruit that the Spirit brings forth. They are only interested in the Spirit Himself. They kept the other two wells, and this is the terrible thing: **God lets us keep the Spirit's workings even if we are not interested in the fruit of the Spirit. Balaam had visions in the Spirit, Samson did mighty exploits in the Spirit, Saul prophesied in the Spirit even while he was chasing David with hatred, Judas did all the works of the Spirit (or the other disciples would soon have found him out), men and women may demonstrate miracles and prophesy in the Spirit -- and the Lord Jesus will say: 'Depart from Me! I never knew you.' The workings of the Spirit are dangerous, not because of what they are in themselves. They may be necessary for the work of God, but they are dangerous because we deceive ourselves with them. We claim a unique experience of the Spirit ourselves: 'This water is ours!' We are not interested in the fruit, but only in the sayings and manifestations. God allows that, and we delude ourselves as to our spirituality. Spirituality can never be understood by the manifestations. You might be very spiritual, or you might have no spirituality, but God will let you have the workings of the Spirit. The Philistines could take those workings for themselves, but it was as in Rehoboth that the fruit was brought forth.**

Quite an interesting thing to dwell on.

Re: - posted by Tears_of_joy, on: 2007/7/2 16:08

Quote:
-----This is challenging. How many times have we offered worldly advice in such a situation when **the truth was the only way to make them free?** I think that sometimes we avoid the hard truth simply to spare our own selves the possibility of being misunderstood or because of some so-called "comfort zone" that we dare not pass, so instead we offer something that is ultimately a lie. Lord deliver us from superficial binding of wounds.

Very good word, brother Ron.

Kire

Re: - posted by InTheLight (), on: 2007/7/2 16:50

crsschk wrote:

Quote:
-----Would love to read that...

Here is a link to the author index of the online archive of the magazine Toward the Mark which was the successor to A Witness and a Testimony. In that index scroll down to Poul Madsen and you will find a number of entries under the heading 'Chapter by Chapter Through Romans'. There are also many other articles by Madsen there, some very good stuff. R

oger Forster and Harry Foster (The editor) are very good too.

(<http://www.austin-sparks.net/mags/ttm00ind.html>) Toward the Mark - Author Index