

Articles and Sermons :: A New Spirit and God's Spirit - Andrew Murray

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A New Spirit, and God's Spirit

By Andrew Murray

A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. And I will put my Spirit within you.' -Ezekiel 36: 26, 27.

GOD has revealed Himself in two great dispensations. In the Old we have the, time of promise and preparation, in the New that of fulfilment and possession.' In harmony with the difference of the two dispensations, there is a two fold working of God's Spirit. In the Old Testament we have the Spirit of God coming upon men, and working on them in special times and ways, working from above and without, inwards. In the New we have the Holy Spirit entering them and dwelling within them, working from within, outwards and upwards. In the former we have the Spirit of God as the Almighty and Holy One; in the latter we have the Spirit of the Father of Jesus Christ.

The difference between the twofold, operation of the Holy Spirit is not to be regarded as if, with the closing of the Old Testament, the former ceased, and there was in the New no more of the work of preparation. By no means. Just as there were in the Old blessed anticipations of the indwelling of God's Spirit, so now in the New Testament the twofold working still continues. According to the lack of knowledge, or of faith, or - of faithfulness, a believer may even in these days get little beyond the Old Testament measure of the Spirit's working. The indwelling Spirit has indeed been given to every child of God, and yet he may experience little beyond the first half of the promise, the new spirit given us in regeneration, and know almost nothing of God's own Spirit, as a living person put within us. The Spirit's work in convincing of sin and of righteousness, in His leading to repentance and faith and the new life, is but the preparatory work. The distinctive glory of the dispensation of the Spirit is His Divine personal indwelling in the heart of the believer, there to reveal the Father and the Son. It is only as Christians understand and remember this, that they will be able to claim the full blessing prepared for them in Christ Jesus.

In the words of Ezekiel we find, in the one promise, this twofold blessing God bestows through His Spirit very strikingly set forth. The first is, 'I will put within you a new spirit,' that is, man's own spirit is to be renewed and quickened by the work of God's Spirit. When this has been done, then there is the second blessing, 'I will put my Spirit within you,' to dwell in that new spirit, Where God is to dwell, He must have a habitation. With Adam He had to create a body before He could breathe the spirit of life into him. In Israel the tabernacle and the temple had to be built and completed before God could come down and take possession. And just so a new heart is given, and a new spirit put within us, as the indispensable condition of God's own Spirit being given to dwell within us. The difference is the same we find in David's prayer. First, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God ! and renew a right spirit within me;' then, 'Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.' Or what is indicated in the words, 'That which is born of the spirit is spirit : ' there is the Divine Spirit begetting, and the new spirit begotten by Him. So the two are also distinguished, 'God's Spirit beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God! Our spirit is the renewed regenerate spirit; dwelling in this, and yet to be distinguished from it, is God's Holy Spirit, witnessing in, with, and through it.'

The importance of recognising this distinction can easily be perceived. We shall then be able to understand the true relation between regeneration and the indwelling of the Spirit. The former is that work of the Holy Spirit, by which He convinces us of sin, leads to repentance and faith in Christ, and imparts a new nature. Through the Spirit God thus fulfils the promise, 'I will put a new spirit within you.' The believer is now a child of God, a temple ready for the Spirit to dwell in. Where faith claims it, the second half of the promise is fulfilled as surely as the first. As long now as the believer only looks at regeneration, and the renewal wrought in his spirit, he will not come to the life of joy and strength which is meant for him. But when he accepts God's promise that there is something better than even the new nature, than the inner temple, that there is the Spirit of the Father and the Son to dwell within him, there opens up a wonderful prospect of holiness and blessedness. It becomes his one great desire to know this Holy Spirit aright, how He works and what He asks, to know how he may to the full experience His indwelling, and that revelation of the Son of God within us which it is His work to bestow.

The question will be asked, How these two parts of the Divine promise are fulfilled ? simultaneously or successively ? The answer is very simple: From God's side the twofold gift is simultaneous. The Spirit is not divided: in giving the Spirit

t, God gives Himself and all He is. So it was on the day of Pentecost. The three thousand received the new spirit, with repentance and faith, and then, when they had been baptized, the Indwelling Spirit, as God's seal to their faith, on one day. Through the word of disciples, the Spirit, which had come upon them, wrought mightily on the multitude, changing disposition and heart and spirit. When, in the power of this new spirit working in them, they had believed and confessed, they received the baptism of Holy Spirit to abide in them. And so still in times when the Spirit of God moves mightily, and the Church is living in the power of the Spirit, the children which are begotten of her receive from the first beginnings of their Christian life the distinct conscious sealing and indwelling of the Spirit. And yet we have indications in Scripture that there may be circumstances, dependent either on the endowment of the preacher or the faith of the hearers in which the two halves of the promise are not so closely linked. So it was with the believers in Samaria converted under Philip's preaching; and so too with the converts Paul met at Ephesus. In their case was repeated the experience of the apostles themselves. We regard them as regenerate men before our Lord's death; it was only at Pentecost that the promise was fulfilled, 'He shall be in you!' What was seen in them, just as in the Old and New Testaments, - the grace of the Spirit divided into two separate manifestations, - may still take place in our day. When, the standard of spiritual life in a Church is sickly and low, when neither in the preaching of the word nor in the testimony of believers, the glorious truth of an Indwelling Spirit is distinctly proclaimed, we must not wonder if, even where God gives His Spirit, He be known and experienced only as the Spirit of regeneration. His Indwelling Presence will remain a mystery. In the gift of God, the Spirit of Christ in all His fulness is bestowed once for all as an Indwelling Spirit; but He is received and possessed only as far as the faith of the believer reaches.

It is generally admitted in the Church that the Holy Spirit has - not the recognition which becomes Him as being the equal of the Father and the Son, the Divine Person through whom alone the Father and the Son can be truly possessed and known, in whom alone the Church has her beauty and her blessedness. In the Reformation, of blessed memory, the Gospel of Christ had to be vindicated from the terrible misapprehension which makes man's righteousness the ground of his acceptance, and the freeness of Divine grace had to be maintained. To the ages that followed was committed the trust of building on that foundation, and developing what the riches of grace would do for the believer through the indwelling of the Spirit of Jesus. The Church rested too content in what it had received, and the teaching of all that the Holy Spirit will be to each believer in His guiding, sanctifying, strengthening power, has never yet taken the place it ought to have in our evangelical teaching and living.

And there is many an earnest Christian who will in the confession lately made by a young believer of intelligence: I think I understand the work of the Father and the Son, and rejoice in them, but I hardly see the place the Spirit has. Let us unite with all who are pleading that God in power may grant mighty Spirit workings in His Church, that each child of God may prove that in him the double promise is fulfilled: I will give a new spirit within you, and I will give my Spirit within you. Let us pray that we may so apprehend the wonderful blessing of the Indwelling Spirit, as to turn inward and have our whole inmost being opened up for this, the full revelation of the Father's love and the grace of Jesus.

'Within you!' Within you! This twice-repeated word of our text is one of the keywords of the 'New Covenant.' 'I will put my law in their inward parts, 'and in their heart will I write it.' I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.' God created man's heart for His dwelling. Sin entered, and defiled it. Four thousand years God's Spirit strove and wrought to regain possession. In the Incarnation and Atonement of Christ the Redemption was accomplished, and the kingdom of God established. Jesus could say, 'The kingdom of God is come unto you;' 'the kingdom of God is within you.' It is within we must look for the fulfilment of the New Covenant, the Covenant not of ordinances but of life: in the power of an endless life the law and the fear of God are to be given in our heart: the Spirit of Christ Himself is to be within us as the power of our life. Not only on Calvary, or in the resurrection, or on the throne, is the glory of Christ the Conqueror to be seen, - but in our heart: within us, within us is to be the true display of the reality and the glory of His Redemption. Within us, in our inmost parts, is the hidden sanctuary where is the ark of the Covenant, sprinkled with the Blood, and containing the Law written in an ever-living writing by the Indwelling Spirit, and where, through the Spirit, the Father and the Son now come to dwell.

O my God! I do thank Thee for this double blessing. I thank Thee for that wonderful holy temple Thou hast built up in me for Thyself - a new spirit given within me. And I thank Thee for that still more wonderful Holy Presence, Thine Own Spirit, to dwell within me, and there reveal the Father and the Son.

O my God! I do pray Thee to open mine eyes for this the mystery of Thy love. Let Thy words, within you, bow me low in trembling fear before Thy condescension, and may my one desire be to have my spirit indeed the worthy dwelling of Thy Spirit. Let them lift me up in holy trust and expectation, to look for and claim all that Thy promise means.

O my Father!, I thank Thee that Thy Spirit doth dwell in me. I pray Thee, let His indwelling be in power, in the living f

ellowship with Thyself, in the growing experience of His renewing power, in the ever fresh anointing that witnesses to His Presence, and the indwelling of my Glorified Lord Jesus. May my daily walk be in the deep reverence of His Holy Presence within me, and the glad experience of all He works. Amen.