

HAVING THE SPIRIT



J.C. RYLE (1816-1900)

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Contents

1. The Importance of Having the Spirit 4
2. How to Know Whether We Have the Spirit... 12
3. The Marks of the Spirit..... 19

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HAVING THE SPIRIT

“Having not the Spirit.”—Jude 1:19.

I take it for granted that every reader of this paper believes in the Holy Spirit. The number of people in this country who are infidels, deists, or Socinians¹ and openly deny the doctrine of the Trinity is happily not very great. Most persons have been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. There are few churchmen,² at any rate, who have not often heard the well-known words of our old catechism, “I believe in God the Holy Ghost, Who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God.”

But, notwithstanding all this, it would be well for many if they would consider what they know of the Holy Spirit beyond His name. What experimental³ acquaintance have you with the Spirit’s work? What has He done for you? What benefit have you received from Him? You can say of God the Father, “He made me and all the world.” You can say of God the Son, “He died for me and all mankind.” But can you say anything about the Holy Ghost? Can you say, with any degree of confidence, “He dwells in me, and sanctifies me”? In one word, *Have you the Spirit?* The text which heads this

¹ **Socinians** – followers of the sect founded by Faustus Socinius, 16th century Italian theologian, who denied the deity of Christ and denied that the cross brought forgiveness of sins.

² **churchmen** – members of the Anglican church.

³ **experimental** – experiential.

paper will tell you that there is such a thing as *not* having the Spirit. This is the point which I press upon your attention.

I believe the point to be one of vital importance at all seasons. I hold it to be one of special importance in the present day. I consider that clear views about the work of the Holy Spirit are among the best preservatives against the many false doctrines which abound in our times. Suffer me, then, to lay before you a few things, which by God's blessing may throw light on the subject of having the Spirit.

1. Let me explain the *immense importance* of having the Spirit.

2. Let me point out the *great general principle* by which alone the question can be tried: "Have you the Spirit?"

3. Let me describe the *particular effects* which the Spirit always produces on the souls in which He dwells.

1. The Importance of Having the Spirit

Let me, in the first place, explain the *immense importance* of having the Spirit.

It is absolutely necessary to make this point clear. Unless you see this, I shall appear like one beating the air all through this paper. Once let your mind lay hold on this, and half the work I want to do is already done for your soul.

I can easily fancy some reader saying, "I do not see the use of this question! Supposing I have not the Spirit, where is the mighty harm? I try to do my duty in this world. I attend my church regularly. I receive

the sacrament⁴ occasionally. I believe I am as good a Christian as my neighbors. I say my prayers. I trust God will pardon my sins for Christ's sake. I do not see why I should not reach heaven at last without troubling myself with hard questions about the Spirit."

If these are your thoughts, I entreat you to give me your attention for a few minutes while I try to supply you with reasons for thinking differently. Believe me, nothing less than your soul's salvation depends on having the Spirit. Life or death, heaven or hell, eternal happiness or eternal misery, are bound up with the subject of this paper.

a. No part in Christ

Remember, for one thing, if you have not the Spirit, *you have no part in Christ and no title to heaven.*

The words of St. Paul are express and unmistakable: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom 8:9). The words of St. John are no less clear: "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us" (1Jo 3:24). The indwelling of God the Holy Spirit is the common mark of all true believers in Christ. It is the Shepherd's mark on the flock of the Lord Jesus, distinguishing them from the rest of the world. It is the goldsmith's stamp on the genuine sons of God, which separates them from the dross and mass of false professors. It is the King's own seal on those who are His peculiar people, proving them to be His own property. It is "the earnest" which the Redeemer gives to His believing disciples while they are in the body, as a pledge of the full and

⁴ **sacrament** – Lord's Supper.

complete “redemption” yet to come in the resurrection morning (Eph 1:14). This is the case of all believers. They all have the Spirit.

Let it be distinctly understood that he who has not the Spirit has not Christ. He who has not Christ has no pardon of his sins, no peace with God, no title to heaven, no well-grounded hope of being saved. His religion is like the house built on the sand. It may look well in fine weather. It may satisfy him in the time of health and prosperity. But when the flood rises and the wind blows, when sickness and trouble come up against him, it will fall and bury him under its ruins. He lives without a good hope, and without a good hope he dies. He will rise again only to be miserable. He will stand in the judgment only to be condemned. He will see saints and angels looking on and remember he might have been among them, but too late. He will see lost myriads around him and find they cannot comfort him, but too late. This will be the end of the man who thinks to reach heaven without the Spirit.

Settle these things down in your memory and let them never be forgotten. Are they not worth remembering? No Holy Spirit in you—no part in Christ! No part in Christ—no forgiveness of sins! No forgiveness of sins—no peace with God! No peace with God—no title to heaven! No title to heaven—no admission into heaven! No admission into heaven—and what then? Aye, what then? You may well ask. Whither will you flee? Which way will you turn? To what refuge will you run? There is none at all. There remains nothing but hell. Not admitted into heaven, you must sink at last into hell.

I ask every reader of this paper to mark well what I say. Perhaps it startles you; but may it not be good for you to be startled? Have I told you anything more than simple scriptural truth? Where is the defective link in the chain of reasoning you have heard? Where is the flaw in the argument? I believe in my conscience there is none. From not having the Spirit to being in hell, there is but a long flight of downward steps. Living without the Spirit, you are already on the top. Dying without the Spirit, you will find your way to the bottom.

b. No holiness of heart

Remember, for another thing, if you have not the Spirit *you have no holiness of heart and no meetness⁵ for heaven.*

Heaven is the place to which all people hope to go after death. It would be well for many if they considered calmly what kind of dwelling-place heaven is. It is the habitation of the King of kings, Who is “of purer eyes than to behold evil” (Hab 1:13), and it must needs be a holy place. It is a place into which Scripture tells us there shall enter in nothing “that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination” (Rev 21:27). It is a place where there shall be nothing wicked, sinful, or sensual—nothing worldly, foolish, frivolous, or profane. *There*, let the covetous man remember, shall be no more money. *There*, let the pleasure-seeker remember, shall be no more races, theaters, novel reading, or balls. *There*, let the drunkard and the gambler remember, shall be no more strong drink, no more dice, no

⁵ **meetness** – fitness; qualification.

more betting, no more cards. The everlasting presence of God, saints, and angels; the perpetual doing of God's will; the complete absence of everything which God does not approve—these are the chief things which shall make up heaven. It shall be an eternal Sabbath day.

For this heaven we are all by nature utterly unfit. We have no capacity for enjoying its happiness. We have no taste for its blessings. We have no eye to see its beauty. We have no heart to feel its comforts. Instead of freedom, we should find it bondage. Instead of glorious liberty, we should find it constant constraint. Instead of a splendid palace, we should find it a gloomy prison. A fish on dry land, a sheep in the water, an eagle in a cage, and a painted savage in a royal drawing room would all feel more at ease and in their place than a natural man in heaven. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Heb 12:14).

For this heaven, it is the special office of the Holy Ghost to prepare men's souls. He alone can change the earthly heart and purify the worldly affections of Adam's children. He alone can bring their minds into harmony with God and tune them for the eternal company of saints and angels and Christ. He alone can make them love what God loves, and hate what God hates, and delight in God's presence. He alone can set the limbs of human nature, which were broken and dislocated by Adam's fall, and bring about a real unity between man's will and God's. And this He does for every one that is saved. It is written of believers that they are saved according to God's mercy, but it is "by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Ti 3:5). They are chosen unto salvation, but it

is “through sanctification of the Spirit,” as well as “belief of the truth” (2Th 2:13).

Let this also be written down on the tablet of your memory. No entrance into heaven without the Spirit first entering your heart upon earth! No admission into glory in the next life without previous sanctification in this life! No Holy Spirit in you in this world, then no heaven in the world to come! You would not be fit for it. You would not be ready for it. You would not like it. You would not enjoy it. There is much use made in the present day of the word *holy*. Our ears are wearied with “holy church,” and “holy baptism,” and “holy days,” and “holy water,” and “holy services,” and “holy priests.” But one thing is a thousand times more important; and that is to be made *a really holy man* by the Spirit. We must be made “partakers of the divine nature” while we are alive (2Pe 1:4). We must sow to the Spirit if we would ever reap life everlasting (Gal 6:8).

c. No right to be considered a Christian

Remember, for another thing, if you have not the Spirit, *you have no right to be considered a true Christian*, and no will or power to become one.

It requires little to make a Christian according to the standard of the world. Only let a man be baptized and attend some place of worship, and the requirements of the world are satisfied. The man’s belief may not be so intelligent as that of a Turk⁶; he may be profoundly ignorant of the Bible. The man’s practice may be no better than that of a heathen; many a respectable

⁶ Turk – Muslim.

Hindu might put him to shame. But what of that? He is an Englishman! He has been baptized! He goes to church or chapel and behaves decently when there! What more would you have? If you do not call him a Christian, you are thought very uncharitable!

But it takes a great deal more than this to make a man a real Christian according to the standard of the Bible. It requires the cooperation of all the three Persons of the blessed Trinity. The election of God the Father, the blood and intercession of God the Son, and the sanctification of God the Spirit must all meet together on the soul that is to be saved. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost must unite to work the work of making any child of Adam a true Christian.

This is a deep subject and one that must be handled with reverence. But where the Bible speaks with decision, there we may also speak with decision; and the words of the Bible have no meaning if the work of the Holy Spirit be not just as needful in order to make a man a true Christian as the work of the Father or the work of the Son. "No man," we are told, "can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1Co 12:3). True Christians, we are taught in Scripture, are "born of the Spirit" (Joh 3:6). They "live in the Spirit" (Gal 5:25). They "are led by the Spirit" (Rom 8:14). By the Spirit they mortify the deeds of the body. By one Spirit they have access through Jesus unto the Father (Eph 2:18). Their graces are all "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal 5:22). They are "the temple of the Holy Ghost" (1Co 6:19). They are a "habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph 2:22). They "walk...after the Spirit" (Rom 8:4). They are strengthened by the Spirit (Eph 3:16). Through the Spirit they "wait for the hope of

righteousness by faith” (Gal 5:5). These are plain scriptural expressions. Who will dare to gainsay⁷ them?

The truth is that the deep corruption of human nature would make salvation impossible if it were not for the work of the Spirit. Without Him the Father’s love and the Son’s redemption are set before us in vain. The Spirit must reveal them. The Spirit must apply them, or else we are lost souls.

Nothing less than the power of Him Who moved on the face of the waters in the day of creation can ever raise us from our low estate. He Who said, “Let there be light: and there was light” (Gen 1:3), must speak the word before any one of us will ever rise to newness of life. He Who came down on the day of Pentecost must come down on our poor dead souls before they will ever see the kingdom of God. Mercies and afflictions may move the surface of our hearts, but they alone will never reach the inner man. Sacraments and services and sermons may produce outward formality and clothe us with a skin of religion, but there will be no life. Ministers may make communicants and fill churches with regular worshippers; the almighty power of the Holy Ghost alone can make true Christians and fill heaven with glorified saints.

Let this also be written in your memory and never forgotten. No Holy Spirit—no true Christianity! You must have the Spirit *in* you as well as Christ *for* you if you are ever to be saved. God must be your loving Father, Jesus must be your *known* Redeemer, the Holy

⁷ **gainsay** – contradict.

Ghost must be your *felt*⁸ Sanctifier, or else it will be better for you never to have been born.

I press the subject on the serious consideration of all who read these pages. I trust I have said enough to show you that it is of vital importance to your soul to have the Spirit. It is no abstruse and mysterious point of divinity. It is no nice⁹ question of which the solution matters little one way or another. It is a subject in which is bound up the everlasting peace of your soul.

You may not like the tidings. You may call it enthusiasm or fanaticism or extravagance. I take my stand on the plain teaching of the Bible. I say that God must dwell in your heart by the Spirit on earth, or you will never dwell with God in heaven.

“Ah,” you may say, “I do not know much about it. I trust Christ will be merciful. I hope I shall go to heaven after all.” I answer, No man ever yet tasted of Christ’s mercy who did not also receive of His Spirit. No man was ever justified who was not also sanctified. No man ever went to heaven who was not led there by the Spirit.

2. How to Know Whether We Have the Spirit

Let me, in the second place, point out the *great general rule and principle* by which the question may be decided, whether we have the Spirit.

⁸ Ryle uses the word *felt* to refer to experiencing the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit in the battle over sin, not just a particular emotional experience.

⁹ **nice** – trivial; overly precise.

I can quite understand that the idea of knowing whether we have the Spirit is disagreeable to many minds. I am not ignorant of the objections which Satan at once stirs up in the natural heart. "It is impossible to know it," says one person. "It is a deep thing, and beyond our reach." "It is too mysterious a thing to inquire into," says another. "We must be content to leave the subject in uncertainty." "It is wrong to pretend to know anything about it," says a third. "We were never meant to look into such questions. It is only fit for enthusiasts and fanatics to talk of having the Spirit." I hear such objections without being moved by them. I say that it can be known whether a man has the Spirit. It *can* be known, it *may* be known, it *ought* to be known. It needs no vision from heaven, no revelation from an angel to discern it. It needs nothing but calm inquiry by the light of God's Word. Let us enter upon that inquiry.

a. Not all have the Spirit

Not all men have the Holy Spirit. I regard the doctrine of an inward spiritual light enjoyed by all mankind as an unscriptural delusion. I believe the modern notion of universal inspiration to be a baseless dream. Without controversy, God has not left Himself without a witness in the heart of fallen man. He has left in every mind sufficient knowledge of right and wrong to make all men responsible and accountable. He has given to every child of Adam a *conscience*; but He has not given to every child of Adam the Holy Ghost. A man may have good wishes like Balaam, do many things like Herod, be almost persuaded like Agrippa, and tremble like Felix, and yet be as utterly destitute of the grace of the

Spirit as these men were. St. Paul tells us that before conversion men may “know God” in a certain sense and have “thoughts...accusing or...excusing one another” (Rom 1:21; 2:15). But he also tells us that before conversion men are “without God” and “without Christ,” have “no hope,” and are “darkness” itself (Eph 2:12; 5:8). The Lord Jesus Himself says of the Spirit, “The world...seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (Joh 14:17).

Not all members of churches and baptized persons have the Spirit. I see no ground in Scripture for saying that every man who receives baptism receives the Holy Ghost and that we ought to regard him as born of the Spirit. I dare not tell baptized people that they all have the Spirit and that they only need “stir up the gift of God” within them in order to be saved (2Ti 1:6). I see, on the contrary, that Jude speaks of members of the visible church in his day as “having not the Spirit.” Some of them probably had been baptized by the hands of apostles and admitted into full communion with the professing church. No matter! They had not the Spirit (Jude 1:19).

It is vain to attempt to evade the power of this single expression. It teaches plainly that having the Spirit is not the lot of every man and not the portion of every member of the visible church of Christ. It shows the necessity of finding out some general rule and principle by which the presence of the Spirit in a man may be ascertained. He does not dwell in everyone. Baptism and churchmanship are no proofs of His presence. How, then, shall I know whether a man has the Spirit?

b. Visible effects

The presence of the Spirit in a man's soul can only be known by *the effects* which He produces. *The fruits* He causes to be brought forth in a man's heart and life are the only evidence which can be depended on. A man's faith, a man's opinions, and a man's practice are the witnesses we must examine if we would find out whether a man has the Spirit. This is the rule of the Lord Jesus: "Every tree is known by his own fruit" (Luk 6:44).

The effects which the Holy Spirit produces may always be *seen*. The man of the world may not understand them. They may in many cases be feeble and indistinct; but where the Spirit is, He will not be hid. He is not idle when He enters the heart. He does not lie still; He does not sleep. He will make His presence known. He will shine out little by little through the windows of a man's daily habits and conversation and manifest to the world that He is in him. A dormant, torpid,¹⁰ silent indwelling of the Spirit is a notion that pleases the minds of many. It is a notion for which I see no authority in the Word of God. I hold entirely with the homily for Whitsunday:¹¹ "As the tree is known by his fruit, so is also the Holy Ghost."

In whomsoever I see the effects and fruits of the Spirit, in that man I see one who has the Spirit. I believe it to be not only charitable to think so, but presumption to doubt it. I do not expect to behold the Holy Ghost with my bodily eyes or to touch Him with

¹⁰ **torpid** – sluggish; inactive.

¹¹ **homily for Whitsunday** – sermon for Pentecost from the *Second Book of Homilies* for the Anglican church.

my hands. But I need no angel to come down to show me where He dwells; I need no vision from heaven to tell me where I may find Him. Only show me a man in whom the fruits of the Spirit are to be seen, and I see one who has the Spirit. I will not doubt the inward presence of the almighty *cause* when I see the outward fact of an evident *effect*.

c. Natural examples

Can I see *the wind* on a stormy day? I cannot, but I can see the effects of its force and power. When I see the clouds driven before it and the trees bending under it; when I hear it whistling through doors and windows or howling round the chimney tops, I do not for a moment doubt its existence. I say, "There is a wind." Just so it is with the presence of the Spirit in the soul.

Can I see the *dew* of heaven as it falls on a summer evening? I cannot. It comes down softly and gently, noiseless and imperceptible. But when I go forth in the morning after a cloudless night and see every leaf sparkling with moisture and feel every blade of grass damp and wet, I say at once, "There has been a dew." Just so it is with the presence of the Spirit in the soul.

Can I see the *hand of the sower* when I walk through the wheatfields in the month of July? I cannot. I see nothing but millions of ears rich with grain, and bending to the ground with ripeness. But do I suppose that harvest came by chance and grew of itself? I suppose nothing of the kind. I know when I see those wheatfields that the plough and the harrow were at work one day, and that a hand has been there which sowed the seed. Just so it is with the work of the Spirit in the soul.

Can I see the *magnetic fluid* in the compass needle? I cannot. It acts in a hidden mysterious way. But when I see that little piece of iron always turning to the north, I know at once that it is under the secret influence of magnetic power. Just so it is with the work of the Spirit in the soul.

Can I see the *mainspring of my watch* when I look upon its face? I cannot. But when I see the fingers going round and telling the hours and minutes of the day in regular succession, I do not doubt the mainspring's existence. Just so it is with the work of the Spirit.

Can I see *the steersman* of the homeward-bound ship when she first comes in sight and her sails whiten on the horizon? I cannot. But when I stand on the pier-head and see that ship working her course over the sea towards the harbor's mouth, like a thing of life, I know well there is one at the helm who guides her movements. Just so it is with the work of the Spirit.

I charge all my readers to remember this. Establish it as a settled principle in your mind that if the Holy Ghost really is in a man, it will be *seen* in the effects He produces on his heart and life.

d. Dangerous delusions

Beware of supposing that a man may have the Spirit when there is no outward evidence of His presence in the soul. It is a dangerous and unscriptural delusion to think so. We must never lose sight of the broad principles laid down for us in Scripture: "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth...In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God" (1Jo 1:6; 3:10).

You have heard, I doubt not, of a wretched class of Christians called *Antinomians*. They are persons who boast of having an interest in Christ and say they are pardoned and forgiven, while at the same time they live in willful sin and open breach of God's commandments. You have been told, I dare say, that such people are miserably deceived. They are going down to hell with a lie in their right hand. The true believer in Christ is "dead to sin" (Rom 6:2). Every man that has real hope in Christ "purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1Jo 3:3).

But I will tell you of a delusion quite as dangerous as that of the Antinomians, and far more specious.¹² That delusion is to flatter yourself you have the Spirit dwelling in your heart while there are no fruits of the Spirit to be seen in your life. I firmly believe that this delusion is ruining thousands, as surely as Antinomianism. It is just as perilous to dishonor the Holy Ghost as it is to dishonor Christ. It is just as offensive to God to pretend to an interest in the work of the Spirit as it is to pretend to an interest in the work of Christ.

Once for all, I charge my readers to remember that the effects which the Spirit produces are the only trustworthy evidences of His presence. To talk of the Holy Ghost dwelling in you and yet being unseen in your life is wild work indeed. It confounds the first principles of the gospel. It confounds light and darkness, nature and grace, conversion and unconversion, faith and unbelief, the children of God and the children of the devil.

There is only one safe position in this matter. There is only one safe answer to the question, "How shall we

¹² **specious** – seemingly probable, but false.

decide who have the Spirit?" We must take our stand on the old principle laid down by our Lord Jesus Christ: "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Mat 7:20). Where the Spirit is, there will be fruit. He who has no fruit of the Spirit has not the Spirit. A work of the Spirit unfelt, unseen, inoperative, is a positive delusion. Where the Spirit really is, He will be felt, seen, and known.

3. The Marks of the Spirit

Let me, in the last place, describe the *particular effects* which the Spirit produces on the souls in which He dwells.

I regard this part of the subject as the most important of all. Hitherto I have spoken generally of the great leading principles which must guide us in inquiring about the work of the Holy Ghost. I must now come closer and speak of the special marks by which the presence of the Holy Ghost in any individual heart may be discerned. Happily, with the Bible for our light, these marks are not hard to find out.

Some things I wish to premise before entering fully into the subject. It is needful in order to clear the way.

a. Deep mysteries

I grant freely that there are *some deep mysteries* about the work of the Spirit. I cannot explain the manner of His coming into the heart. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (Joh 3:8). I cannot explain why He comes into one heart and not into another, why He condescends to dwell in this

man and not in that. I only know that so it is. He acts as a sovereign. To use the words of the Church Catechism,¹³ He sanctifieth “the elect people of God.” But I remember also that I cannot explain why I was born in Christian England and not in heathen Africa. I am satisfied to believe that all God’s work is well done. It is enough for me to be in the King’s court, without being of the King’s counsel.

b. Great diversities

I grant freely that there are *great diversities* in the operations by which the Spirit carries on His work in men’s souls. There are differences in the *ages* at which He begins to enter the heart. With some He begins young, as with John the Baptist and Timothy. With some he begins old, as with Manasseh and Zacchæus. There are differences in the *feelings* which He first stirs up in the heart. He leads some by strong terror and alarm, like the jailer at Philippi. He leads some by gently opening their hearts to receive the truth, as Lydia, the purple-seller. There are differences in the *time occupied* in effecting this complete change of character. With some the change is immediate and sudden, as it was with Saul when he journeyed to Damascus. With others it is gradual and slow, as it was with Nicodemus the Pharisee. There are differences in the *instruments* He uses in first awakening the soul from its natural death. With some He uses a sermon; with others the Bible; with others a tract; with others a friend’s advice; with others a sickness or affliction; with others no one particular thing that can be distinctly traced. All this is

¹³ *The Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer* (1662).

most important to understand. To require all persons to be squared down to one kind of experience is a most grievous mistake.

c. Small beginnings

I grant freely that the *beginnings of the Spirit's work are often small and imperceptible*. The seed from which the spiritual character is formed is often very minute at first. The fountainhead of the spiritual life, like that of many a mighty river, is frequently at its outset a little trickling stream. The beginnings therefore of the Spirit's work in a soul are generally overlooked by the world, very frequently not duly valued and encouraged by other Christians, and almost without exception thoroughly misunderstood by the soul itself which is the subject of them. *Let that never be forgotten*. The man in whom the Spirit begins to work is never hardly aware, till long afterwards, that his state of mind about the time of his conversion arose from the entrance of the Holy Spirit.

But still, after all these concessions and allowances, there are certain great leading effects which the Spirit produces on the soul in which He dwells, which are always one and the same. Those who have the Spirit may be led at first by different *paths*; but they are always brought, sooner or later, into one and the same *narrow way*. Their leading opinions in religion are the same. Their leading desires are the same. Their general walk is the same. They may differ from one another widely in their natural character; but their spiritual character, in its main features, is always one. The Holy Ghost always produces one general kind of effects. Shades and varieties there are no doubt in the experience of those

on whose hearts He works, but the general outline of their faith and life is always the same.

d. The marks in order

What then are these general effects which the Spirit always produces on those who really have Him? What are the marks of His presence in the soul? This is the question which now remains to be considered. Let us try to set down these marks in order.

1. All who have the Spirit *are quickened by Him and made spiritually alive*. He is called in Scripture “the Spirit of life” (Rom 8:2). “It is the spirit,” says our Lord Jesus Christ, “that quickeneth” (Joh 6:63). We are all by nature “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1). We have neither feeling nor interest about religion. We have neither faith, nor hope, nor fear, nor love. Our hearts are in a state of torpor;¹⁴ they are compared in Scripture to a stone. We may be alive about money, learning, politics, or pleasure, but we are dead towards God. All this is changed when the Spirit comes into the heart. He raises us from this state of death and makes us new creatures. He awakens the conscience and inclines the will towards God. He causes old things to pass away and all things to become new. He gives us a new heart. He makes us put off the old man and put on the new. He blows the trumpet in the ear of our slumbering faculties and sends us forth to walk the world as if we were new beings. How unlike was Lazarus shut up in the silent tomb to Lazarus coming forth at our Lord’s command! How unlike was Jairus’ daughter lying cold on her bed amidst weeping friends to Jairus’

¹⁴ **torpor** – inactivity; insensibility.

daughter rising and speaking to her mother as she was wont¹⁵ to do! Just as unlike is the man in whom the Spirit dwells to what he was before the Spirit came into him.

I appeal to every thinking reader. Can he whose heart is manifestly full of everything but God—hard, cold, and insensible—can he be said to have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

2. All who have the Spirit are *taught by Him*. He is called in Scripture “the spirit of wisdom and revelation” (Eph 1:17). It was the promise of the Lord Jesus, “He shall teach you all things...He will guide you into all truth” (Joh 14:26; 16:13). We are all by nature ignorant of spiritual truth. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him” (1Co 2:14). Our eyes are blinded. We neither know God, nor Christ, nor ourselves, nor the world, nor sin, nor heaven, nor hell, as we ought. We see everything under false colors. The Spirit alters entirely this state of things. He opens the eyes of our understandings. He illumines us. He calls us out of darkness into marvelous light. He takes away the veil. He shines into our hearts and makes us see things as they really are. No wonder that all true Christians are so remarkably agreed upon the essentials of true religion! The reason is that they have all learned in one school—the school of the Holy Ghost. No wonder that true Christians can understand each other at once and find common ground of communion! They have been taught the same language by One Whose lessons are never forgotten.

¹⁵ **wont** – accustomed.

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can he who is ignorant of the leading doctrines of the gospel and blind to his own state—can he be said to have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

3. All who have the Spirit *are led by Him to the Scriptures*. This is the instrument by which He specially works on the soul. The Word is called “the sword of the Spirit” (Eph 6:17). Those who are born again are said to be “born...by the word” (1Pe 1:23). All Scripture was written under His inspiration. He never teaches anything which is not therein written. He causes the man in whom He dwells to “delight...in the law of the LORD” (Psa 1:2). Just as the infant desires the milk which nature has provided for it and refuses all other food, so does the soul which has the Spirit desire the sincere milk of the Word. Just as the Israelites fed on the manna in the wilderness, so are the children of God taught by the Holy Ghost to feed on the contents of the Bible.

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can he who never reads the Bible or only reads it formally—can he be said to have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

4. All who have the Spirit *are convinced by Him of sin*. This is an especial¹⁶ office which the Lord Jesus promised He should fulfil. “When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin” (Joh 16:8). He alone can open a man’s eyes to the real extent of His guilt and corruption before God. He always does this when He comes into the soul. He puts us in our right place. He shows us the vileness of our own hearts and makes us cry with the publican, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luk

¹⁶ **especial** – principal.

18:13). He pulls down those proud, self-righteous, self-justifying notions with which we are all born and makes us feel as we ought to feel: "I am a bad man, and I deserve to be in hell." Ministers may alarm us for a little season. Sickness may break the ice on our hearts. But the ice will soon freeze again if it is not thawed by the breath of the Spirit, and convictions not wrought by Him will pass away like the morning dew.

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can the man who never feels the burden of his sins and knows not what it is to be humbled by the thought of them—can he have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

5. All who have the Spirit *are led by Him to Christ for salvation*. It is one special part of His office to testify of Christ, to take of the things of Christ, and to show them to us (Joh 15:26; 16:15). By nature, we all think to work our own way to heaven. We fancy in our blindness that we can make our peace with God. From this miserable blindness the Spirit delivers us. He shows us that in ourselves we are lost and hopeless and that Christ is the only door by which we can enter heaven and be saved. He teaches us that nothing but the blood of Jesus can atone for sin, and that through His mediation alone God can be just and the justifier of the ungodly. He reveals to us the exquisite fitness and suitability to our souls of Christ's salvation. He unfolds to us the beauty of the glorious doctrine of justification by simple faith. He sheds abroad in our hearts that mighty love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Just as the dove flies to the well-known cleft of the rock, so does the soul of him who has the Spirit flee to Christ and rest on Him (Rom 5:5).

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can he who knows nothing of faith in Christ be said to have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

6. All who have the Spirit *are by Him made holy*. He is “the spirit of holiness” (Rom 1:4). When He dwells in men, He makes them follow after “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance” (Gal 5:22-23). He makes it *natural* to them, through their new “divine nature,” to count all God’s “precepts concerning all things to be right” and to “hate every false way” (2Pe 1:4; Psa 119:128). Sin is no more pleasant to them. It is their sorrow when tempted by it. It is their shame when they are overtaken by it. Their desire is to be free from it altogether. Their happiest times are when they are enabled to walk most closely with God. Their saddest times are when they are furthest off from Him.

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can those who do not even pretend to live strictly according to God’s will be said to have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

7. All those who have the Spirit *are spiritually minded*. To use the words of the Apostle Paul, “They that are after the Spirit [mind] the things of the Spirit” (Rom 8:5). The general tone, tenor, and bias of their minds is in favor of spiritual things. They do not serve God by fits and starts, but habitually. They may be drawn aside by strong temptations; but the general tendency of their lives, ways, tastes, thoughts, and habits is spiritual. You see it in the way they spend their leisure time, the company they love to keep, and their conduct in their own homes. And all is the result of the spiritual nature implanted in them by the Holy Ghost. Just as the caterpillar when it becomes a butterfly can

no longer be content to crawl on earth, but will fly upwards and use its wings, so will the affections of the man who has the Spirit be ever reaching upwards toward God.

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can those whose minds are wholly intent on the things of this world be said to have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

8. All that have the Spirit *feel a conflict within them between the old nature and the new*. The words of St. Paul are true, more or less, of all the children of God: "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh...so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal 5:17). They feel a holy principle within their breasts, which makes them delight in the law of God; but they feel another principle within, striving hard for the mastery, and struggling to drag them downwards and backwards. Some feel this conflict more than others; but all who have the Spirit are acquainted with it, and it is a token for good. It is a proof that the strong man armed no longer reigns within, as he once did, with undisputed sway. The presence of the Holy Ghost may be known by inward warfare as well as by inward peace. He that has been taught to rest and hope in Christ will always be one who fights and wars with sin.

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can he who knows nothing of inward conflict and is a servant to sin, the world, and his own self-will—can he be said to have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

9. All who have the Spirit *love others who have the Spirit*. It is written of them by St. John, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1Jo 3:14). The more they see of the Holy

Ghost in anyone, the more dear he is to them. They regard him as a member of the same family, a child of the same Father, a subject of the same King, and a fellow-traveler with themselves in a foreign country towards the same fatherland. It is the glory of the Spirit to bring back something of that brotherly love which sin has so miserably chased out of the world. He makes men love one another for reasons which to the natural man are foolishness: for the sake of a common Savior, a common faith, a common service on earth, and the hope of a common home. He raises up friendships independent of blood, marriage, interest, business, or any worldly motive. He unites men by making them feel they are united to one great center, Jesus Christ.

I appeal again to every thinking reader. Can he who finds no pleasure in the company of spiritually-minded persons, or even sneers at them as saints—can he be said to have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

10. Finally, all who have the Spirit are *taught by Him to pray*. He is called in Scripture “the spirit of grace and of supplications” (Zec 12:10). The elect of God are said to “cry day and night unto him” (Luk 18:7). They cannot help it. Their prayers may be poor and weak and wandering, but pray they must. Something within them tells them they must speak with God and lay their wants before Him. Just as the infant will cry when it feels pain or hunger because it is its nature, so will the new nature implanted by the Holy Ghost oblige a man to pray. He has the Spirit of adoption; and he must cry, “Abba, Father” (Gal 4:6).

Once more, I appeal to every thinking reader. Can the man who never prays at all or is content with saying a few formal heartless words—can he be said to

have the Spirit? For the last time I say, Judge for yourself.

Such are the marks and signs by which I believe the presence of the Holy Ghost in a man may be discerned. I have set them down fairly as they appear to me to be laid before us in the Scriptures. I have endeavored to exaggerate nothing and to keep back nothing. I believe there are no true Christians in whom these marks may not be found. Some of them, no doubt, stand out more prominently in some, and others in others. My own experience is distinct and decided, that I never saw a truly godly person, even of the poorest and humblest classes, in whom, on close observation, these marks might not be discovered.

I believe that marks such as these are the only safe evidence that we are travelling in the way that leads to everlasting life. I charge everyone who desires to make his calling and election sure to see that these marks are his own. There are high-flying professors of religion, I know, who despise the mention of "marks" and call them "legal." I care nothing for their being called legal, so long as I am satisfied they are scriptural. And, with the Bible before me, I give my opinion confidently that he who is without these marks is without the Spirit of God.

Show me a man who has these marks about him, and I acknowledge him as a child of God. He may be poor and lowly in this world. He may be vile in his own eyes and often doubt of his own salvation. But he has that within him which only comes from above and will never be destroyed, even the work of the Holy Ghost. God is his. Christ is his. His name is already written in the book of life, and before long heaven will be his own.

Show me a man in whom these marks are not to be found, and I dare not acknowledge him to be a true Christian. I dare not as an honest man. I dare not as a lover of his soul. I dare not as a reader of the Bible. He may make a great religious profession. He may be learned, high in the world, and moral in his life. It is all nothing if he has not the Holy Ghost. He is without God, without Christ, without solid hope, and, unless he changes, will at length be without heaven.

Conclusion

And now let me finish this paper by a few practical remarks which arise naturally out of the matter which it contains.

a. Your duty

Would you know, first of all, *what is your own immediate duty?* Listen, and I will tell you.

You ought to examine yourself calmly about the subject which I have been trying to set before you. You ought to ask yourself seriously how the doctrine of the Holy Ghost affects your soul. Look away, I beseech you for a few minutes, to higher things than the things of earth, and more important things than the things of time. Bear with me, while I ask you a plain question. I ask it solemnly and affectionately, as one who desires your salvation. Have you the Spirit?

Remember, I do not ask whether you think all I have been saying is true and right and good. I ask whether you yourself, who are reading these lines, have within you the Holy Spirit?

Remember, I do not ask whether you believe that the Holy Ghost is given to the church of Christ, and that all who belong to the church are within reach of His operations. I ask whether you yourself have the Spirit in your own heart?

Remember, I do not ask whether you sometimes feel strivings of conscience and good desires flitting about within you. I ask whether you have really experienced the quickening and reviving work of the Spirit upon your heart?

Remember, I do not ask you to tell me the day or month when the Spirit began His work in you. It is enough for me if fruit trees bear fruit without inquiring the precise time when they were planted. But I do ask, Are you bringing forth any fruits of the Spirit?

Remember, I do not ask whether you are a perfect person and never feel anything evil within. But I do ask, gravely and seriously, whether you have about your heart and life the marks of the Spirit?

I hope you will not tell me you do not know what the marks of the Spirit are. I have described them plainly. I now repeat them briefly and press them on your attention. 1. The Spirit quickens men's hearts. 2. The Spirit teaches men's minds. 3. The Spirit leads to the Word. 4. The Spirit convinces of sin. 5. The Spirit draws to Christ. 6. The Spirit sanctifies. 7. The Spirit makes men spiritually-minded. 8. The Spirit produces inward conflict. 9. The Spirit makes men love the brethren. 10. The Spirit teaches to pray. These are the great marks of the Holy Ghost's presence. Put the question to your conscience like a man. Has the Spirit done anything of this kind for your soul?

I charge you not to let many days pass away without trying to answer my question. I summon you, as a faithful watchman knocking at the door of your heart, to bring the matter to an issue. We live in an old, worn-out, sin-laden world. Who can tell what “a day may bring forth”? (Pro 27:1). Who shall live to see another year? Have you the Spirit?

b. The great defect of our times

Would you know, in the next place, what is *the grand defect of the Christianity of our times*? Listen to me, and I will tell you.

The grand defect I speak of is simply this, that the Christianity of many people is not real Christianity at all. I know that such an opinion sounds hard and shockingly uncharitable. I cannot help that. I am satisfied that it is sadly true. I only want people’s Christianity to be that of the Bible; but I doubt exceedingly, in many cases, whether it is so.

There are multitudes of English people, I believe, who go to church or chapel every Sunday merely as a form. Their fathers or mothers went, and so they go. It is the fashion of the country to go, and so they go. It is the custom to attend a religious service and hear a sermon, and so they go. But as to real, vital, saving religion, they neither know nor care anything about it. They can give no account of the distinctive doctrines of the gospel. Justification and regeneration and sanctification are “words and names” which they cannot explain (Act 18:15). They may have a sort of vague idea that they ought to go to the Lord’s Table and may be able to say a few vague words about Christ, but they have no intelligent notion of the way of salvation. As to

the Holy Ghost, they can scarcely say more about Him than that they have heard His name and repeated it in the Belief.¹⁷

Now, if any reader of this paper is conscious that his religion is such as I have described, I will only warn him affectionately to remember that such religion is utterly *useless*. It will neither save, comfort, satisfy, nor sanctify his soul. And the plain advice I give him is to change it for something better without delay. Remember my words. It will not do at the last.

c. A truth assailed

Would you know, in the next place, *one truth in the gospel about which we need to be especially jealous in this day*. Listen, and I will tell you.

The truth which I have in view is the truth about the work of the Holy Ghost. All truth no doubt is constantly assailed by Satan. I have no desire for a moment to exaggerate the office of the Spirit and to exalt Him above the sun and center of the gospel, Jesus Christ. But I do believe that, next to the priestly office of Christ, no truth in the present day is so frequently lost sight of and so cunningly assailed as the work of the Spirit. Some injure it by ignorant neglect. Their talk is all about Christ. They can tell you something about the Savior; but if you ask them about that inward work of the Spirit which all who *really* know the Savior experience, they have not a word to say. Some injure the work of the Spirit by taking it all for granted. Membership of the church and participation of the sacraments become their substitutes for conversion and spiritual

¹⁷ **the Belief** - probably a reference to the Apostles' Creed.

regeneration. Some injure the work of the Spirit by confounding it with the action of natural conscience. According to this low view, none but the most hardened and degraded of mankind are destitute of the Holy Ghost. Against all such departures from the truth let us watch and be on our guard. Let us beware of leaving the proportion of gospel statements. Let one of our chief watchwords in the present day be: No salvation without the inward work of the Spirit! No inward work of the Holy Spirit unless it can be seen, felt, and known! No saving work of the Spirit which does not show itself in repentance towards God and living faith towards Jesus Christ!

d. Cause for great hope

Would you know, in the next place, *the reason why we, who are ministers of the gospel, never despair of anyone who hears us so long as he lives?* Listen, and I will tell you.

We never despair because we believe the power of the Holy Ghost. We might well despair when we look at our own performances. We are often sick of ourselves. We might well despair when we look at some who belong to our congregations. They seem as hard and insensible as the nether millstone. But we remember the Holy Ghost and what He has done. We remember the Holy Ghost and consider that He has not changed. He can come down like fire and melt the hardest hearts. He can convert the worst man or woman among our hearers and mold their whole character into a new shape. And so we preach on. We hope because of the Holy Ghost. Oh, that our hearers would understand that the progress of true religion depends

not on might or on power, but on the Lord's Spirit (Zec 4:6)! Oh, that many of them would learn to lean less on ministers and to pray more for the Holy Spirit! Oh, that all would learn to expect less from schools and tracts and ecclesiastical machinery, and, while using all means diligently, would seek more earnestly for the outpouring of the Spirit.

e. The voice of conscience

Would you know, in the next place, *what you ought to do if your conscience tells you that you have not the Spirit?* Listen, and I will tell you.

If you have not the Spirit, you ought to go at once to the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer and beseech Him to have mercy on you and send you the Spirit. I have not the slightest sympathy with those who tell men to pray for the Holy Spirit in the first place in order that they may go to Christ in the second place. I see no warrant of Scripture for saying so. I only see that if men feel they are needy, perishing sinners, they ought to apply first and foremost, straight and direct, to Jesus Christ. I see that He Himself says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (Joh 7:37). I know that it is written, "Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them" (Psa 68:18). I know it is His special office to baptize with the Holy Ghost and that in Him all fulness dwells (Joh 1:33; Col 1:19). I dare not pretend to be more systematic than the Bible. I believe that Christ is the meeting place between God and the soul, and my first advice to anyone who wants the Spirit must always be, "*Go to Jesus, and tell your want to Him.*"

Furthermore, I would say, if you have not the Spirit, you must be diligent in attending those means of grace through which the Spirit works. You must regularly hear that Word, which is His sword. You must habitually attend those assemblies where His presence is promised. You must, in short, be found *in the way of the Spirit* if you want the Spirit to do you good. Blind Bartimeus would never have received sight had he sat lazily at home and not come forth to sit by the wayside. Zacchæus might never have seen Jesus and become a son of Abraham if he had not run before and climbed up into the sycamore tree. The Spirit is a loving and good Spirit; *but he who despises means of grace resists the Holy Ghost.*

Remember these two things. I firmly believe that no man ever acted honestly and perseveringly on these two pieces of advice who did not, sooner or later, have the Spirit.

f. Doubts and fears

Would you know, in the next place, *what you ought to do if you stand in doubt about your own state and cannot tell whether you have the Spirit?* Listen, and I will tell you.

If you stand in doubt whether you have the Spirit, you ought to examine calmly whether your doubts are well-founded. There are many true believers, I fear, who are destitute of any firm assurance as to their own state. Doubting is their life. I ask such persons to take their Bibles down and consider quietly the grounds of their anxiety. I ask them to consider whence came their sense of sin, however feeble; their love to Christ, however faint; their desire after holiness, however

weak; their pleasure in the company of God's people; their inclination to prayer and the Word? I say, Whence came these things? Did they come from your own heart? Surely not! Nature bears no such fruit. Did they come from the devil? Surely not! Satan does not war against Satan. Whence then, I repeat, did these things come? I warn you to beware lest you grieve the Holy Ghost by doubting the truth of His operations. I tell you it is high time for you to reflect whether you have not been expecting an inward perfection which you had no right to expect and at the same time thanklessly undervaluing a real work which the Holy Ghost has actually wrought in your souls.

A great statesman once said that if a foreigner visited England for the first time with his eyes bandaged and his ears open, hearing everything but seeing nothing, he might well suppose that England was on the road to ruin, so many are the murmurings of the English people. And yet if that same foreigner came to England with his ears stopped and his eyes open, seeing everything and hearing nothing, he would probably suppose that England was the most wealthy and flourishing country in the world, so many are the signs of prosperity that he would see.

I am often disposed to apply this remark to the case of doubting Christians. If I believed all they say of themselves, I should certainly think they were in a bad state. But when I see them living as they do, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, poor in spirit, desiring holiness, loving the name of Christ, keeping up habits of Bible reading and prayer—when I see these things, I cease to be afraid. I trust my eyes more than my ears. I see manifest marks of the Spirit's presence,

and I only grieve that they should refuse to see them themselves. I see the devil robbing them of their peace by instilling these doubts into their minds, and I mourn that they should injure themselves by believing him. Some professors, without controversy, may well doubt whether they have the Spirit, for they have no signs of grace about them. But many nurse up a habit of doubt in their minds for which they have no cause, and of which they ought to be ashamed.

g. Be filled with the Spirit

Would you know, last of all, *what you ought to do if you really have the Spirit*. Listen to me, and I will tell you.

If you have the Spirit, seek to “be filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18). Drink deep of the living waters. Do not be content with a little religion. Pray that the Spirit may fill every corner and chamber of your heart, and that not an inch of room may be left in it for the world and the devil.

If you have the Spirit, “grieve not the...Spirit” (Eph 4:30). It is easy for believers to weaken their sense of His presence and deprive themselves of His comfort. Little sins not mortified, little bad habits of temper or of tongue not corrected, and little compliances with the world are all likely to offend the Holy Ghost. Oh, that believers would remember this! There is far more of heaven on earth to be enjoyed than many of them attain to; and why do they not attain to it? They do not watch sufficiently over their daily ways, and so the Spirit’s work is damped and hindered. The Spirit must be a thoroughly sanctifying Spirit if He is to be a comforter to your soul.

If you have the Spirit, labor to bring forth *all* “the fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22). Read over the list which the apostle has drawn out, and see that no one of these fruits is neglected. Oh, that believers would seek for more “love,” and more “joy!” Then would they do more good to all men. Then would they feel happier themselves. Then would they make religion more beautiful in the eyes of the world!

I commend the things that I have written to the serious attention of every reader of these pages. Let them not have been written in vain. Join with me in praying that the Spirit may be poured out from on high with more abundant influence than He has ever been yet. Pray that He may be poured out on all believers, at home and abroad, that they may be more united and more holy. Pray that He may be poured out on Jews, Muslims, and heathen, that many of them may be converted.

Pray that He may be poured out on Roman Catholics, and especially in Italy and Ireland. Pray that He may be poured out on your own country, and that it may be spared the judgments it deserves. Pray that He may be poured out on all faithful ministers and missionaries, and that their numbers may be increased a hundredfold.

Pray, above all, that He may be poured out in abundant power on your own soul, that if you know not the truth, you may be taught to know it, and that if you know it, you may know it better.

