**VOLUME 1; CHAPTER 14 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE SPIRIT OF LIFE by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*The Spirit of life.*

*Romans 8:2*

THE SPIRIT IS DESCRIBED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AS "THE Spirit of truth," "the Spirit of promise," "the Spirit of grace," "the Spirit of glory." "The Spirit of life" is a suggestive and comprehensive phrase, indicating the relation of the Spirit of God to all life. Two words are here placed together, both of which refer to life. The word "Spirit" suggests life at its very highest. Here, as always, where the reference is to God, the word indicates the originating cause. The word "life" marks rather a manifestation or a form of the essential than the origination and power thereof. This word translated "life" is a very interesting one. The Greek language is richer than ours in this particular, that it has more words than one to describe life. Where we use our word "life" to include many conceptions, there are at least two words in Greek literature, words that we have become familiar with by their adaptation into our language in scientific usage - the words bios and zoe, from which we have derived our words biology and zoology. These two Greek words indicate two thoughts about life, but in Greek classical literature they are other than the thoughts that they indicate in the New Testament. The order of suggestiveness is reversed in the New Testament, and this is an arresting peculiarity which demands attention. The Greek use of the word zoe indicated the purely natural - I may almost say the animal - side of life. The other word, bios, had in it something of an ethical value and a spiritual conception. In all Greek literature you find this contrast is maintained.

But when I take up the New Testament, uniformly I find the order is reversed, and when life is referred to by Jesus, by New Testament writers, the higher word in Greek thinking and Greek writing is relegated to lower uses and the lower word is elevated to higher uses.

Such a fact arrests attention, and a man is immediately driven to ask why this peculiar change - not a studied change, not a change of language adopted after some council had met and decided to adopt it. Then we might have questioned it. We are always open to question anything councils do. It was a change that came into the thinking of all Christian men so quietly, and yet so powerfully, that when you gather up the arguments of the Christian writings and put them into one, you find the strange uniformity. Jesus Himself, so far as the records reveal His teaching, adopted this change, and all the writers conformed to it. A new thought of life lies at the back of this change of word, a new conception of life is its originating cause. These New Testament writers saw life as the Greeks saw it, and yet quite differently. They saw the same things, the same men, the same women, the same animals, the same flowers, the same landscapes, the same seas, the same everything; and yet, without collusion, without decision of Pope, or Council, or Presbytery, or even Congregational Union - I suppose that was the only ecclesiastical court in existence then - without any of these things, I find these men made a change in terminology.

I believe the explanation will be found in the fact that the Christian man recognizes the original sanctity and holiness of every form of life. He has discovered that behind the "natural" of theology - even Paul's theology - is the "natural" of Divine intention, and the "natural" of Divine intention is holy, and is directly due, always and everywhere, in every realm of life, to the activity of the Spirit of God. Without resolution, without decision of Council, the early Christian consciousness made its protest against the idea that life in any form is essentially evil. The early Christian consciousness is perfectly plain in declaring that life has become evil, that man has fallen into willful and rebellious wrong-doing; and it is in this very epistle that you have the most glaring and terrible revelation in literature of what the heart of man is by the choice of his sin. Thus Christianity, powerfully and pervasively, has taken hold of a word in current Greek literature, which always had upon it the taint of sin, and changed its meaning because Christian thought has been remade by the advent and presence of Jesus Christ.

But now, concerning the conception that this presents to our view as Christians, the relation of the Spirit of God to all life is too often forgotten by Christian people. Let me make this broad and inclusive proposition. All life is due to the direct action of the Spirit of God. The Bible never loses sight of that fact. As we take up this ancient literature of the Hebrew people and study it, we find a recognition of the relation of God and the Spirit of God to all life. That is the meaning of the first chapters in Genesis. "In the beginning God created." "Darkness was upon the face of the waters," but "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." The original creation has behind it a spiritual explanation. Travel back as far as you will through ions you cannot measure, and Genesis still sings the anthem of the beginning, "in the beginning God created"; and when there was to be a remaking of a disorganized and chaotic world, again "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." If you study this ancient literature you will find perpetually that the Hebrew heard the wheels of God in the thunder of the storm, and saw the flash of His chariot when the lightning illuminated the heavens. He saw at the back of all life the presence of the Spirit of God. The whole truth has been beautifully expressed by one of our more modern writers:

One Spirit - His

Who wore the plaited thorn with bleeding brows -

Rules universal Nature! Not a flower

But shows some touch, in freckle, streak, or stain

Of His unrivalled pencil. He inspires

Their balmy odors, and imparts their hues,

And bathes their eyes with nectar; and includes

In grains as countless as the seaside sands,

The forms with which He sprinkles all the earth.

You say that is poetry? That is scientific fact to the Christian soul, and science is always poetic if you know it. Think of that conception; what is it? That all the fragrance of the flower is the result of the breathing of the Spirit of God, and every touch of delicate beauty upon its petal is the direct, immediate, actual, absolute workmanship of the Spirit.

That outlook is wide, and radiant, and spacious. Let us confine our attention to the thought suggested in this spacious outlook as it affects man. We suffer today from too constant contemplation of man as he is, and a consequent failure to understand man as God intended he should be. We have been gazing so long and so intently at ruin that we have forgotten the fair lines of the Divine ideal and the plan toward which God is moving and working in all such as are submitted to His Spirit.

In my Bible I have two glimpses of this in human life. The first is spoiled ere I can see it in perfection. The second grows with increasing glory the longer I gaze upon it. I have the "first Adam" and the "last Adam." When I look at the "first" I see the picture of what the Spirit of God means in human life.

You will remember verse 7 in Genesis 2, which runs thus: "Jehovah ... breathed into his nostrils the breath of lives," that suggestive Hebrew plural which is used poetically to indicate the fact of spaciousness and breadth which cannot be expressed in the singular number - "the breath of lives; and man became a living soul." Man is made in the image of God and given dominion over the creation of God. There are no details. The broad poetic facts are stated in that chapter. I turn to chapter 2, and I do not find a contradiction, but an explanatory account of a certain fact and phase of human life which had not been dealt with fully in the first chapter. Here there is revealed to us the nature of man. Man is dust and Deity; of the dust, God in-breathed; linked to the material, offspring of the Spirit, of the earth, of the heavens. It is all poetry, but it is true poetry. Man becomes the conscious and capable ego, when by this mystery, baffling all explanation, the God of heaven by breath Divine makes man.

What is this man's consciousness? First, he is subject to the government of God. That is the first consciousness of personality, as Genesis reveals it. Secondly, he is conscious of the creation that he finds about him. He is able to name things, able to till the soil, able to touch the resources of nature and make them blossom more perfectly. He is a being capable of co-operation with God, and all this in the power of the Spirit.

But I turn from the story. It is disappointing, it is heartbreaking. Just as the glory of it is growing upon the imagination, the vision is clouded and spoiled, and we leave it, and, passing through the centuries, come into the presence of the "last Adam." The story of the human life of Jesus from beginning to its unending condition - for there is no end to it - is the story of this truth, that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of life. All the human life of Jesus, naturally - not supernaturally - was life in the Spirit. His very existence was by the Spirit. He was a Man of the Spirit by processes different from those by which man at first was man of the Spirit. But God may change his methods, and yet do the same thing in the underlying principles of His government in exactly the same way. Once again, the breath of God, and the dust of earth, and the "last Adam," come into human life. His was development in the power of the Spirit - physically, mentally, spiritually, not spiritually alone, but mentally and physically, developing, growing by this very spirit life which He lived.

In His ministry it becomes more patent. He was anointed for ministry by the Spirit of God. He went down into the wilderness to temptation, driven by the Spirit of God. He came out of the wilderness and went back again to ministry in the power of the Spirit of God. He wrought miracles, as the record declares, by this selfsame power of the Spirit. He came to the sublime mystery of His death, and we hear the word again, "through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without blemish unto God." He came to the morning of resurrection, and by the power of that Spirit He took life again, and came back into human consciousness and being. He tarried for forty days among His disciples, and, as Luke, the accurate Greek, the cultured scholar, tells us, He instructed His disciples by the Holy Ghost long before the Spirit was poured upon them. I open the Gospel of John, and read: "In Him was life" - essential life - "and the life was the light of men." What is the life of Jesus? Spiritual life, not spiritual life as we too often use the phrase, as though it were something distinct from human life; but spiritual life in the simplest, and broadest, and profoundest sense of the truth that all life is life by the Spirit of God.

It is this conception which reveals how deadly and dastardly a thing sin is. If I had a life apart from the life of God and the Spirit of God, even then sin would be ungrateful. But when I find that the very life I live is by the Spirit of God, then how dastardly a thing it is to take this in-breathed life of God and use it for purposes that thwart Him, and hinder His Kingdom, and spread the poison all abroad amongst humanity, insulting His love, and hindering His purpose.

The life of Jesus is life in the Spirit from beginning to end, and when I read that "in Him was life, and the life was the light of men," I understand the evangelist to mean that if I want to know what life really is, I must look at Him - physically, mentally, and spiritually - and see this truth, that all life is by the Spirit of God. Man's being, in all its complex wonders, is the creation of the Spirit of God, and the proper use of all the powers of the being is possible only in submission to the Spirit of life.

So that when we speak of regeneration, or of the filling of the Spirit, or of the anointing of the Spirit, or of spiritual life in the deepest and profoundest sense of the term, we are not asking men to enter a range or realm of life for which they were not made. We are calling them back to normality, to naturalness, to the fulfillment of the deepest and profoundest meaning of their own first creation. A man does not by his new birth become something other than himself. He becomes himself, as he never has been until by that new birth he finds himself. Not angels did Jesus Christ come to make; and if His terms are drastic and hard, if ere He can baptize a man with the Spirit of life the man must consent to death, it is in order that he may find by the same new life, not some foreign life, but his own life. If you differ from the exposition, hear the actual words: "He that loseth his life ... shall find it," the very life he is willing to lose. The very life which I lose by submission to Him, the life which I deny in order that I may find Him as my Lord and King, is the life I find. The baptism of God's Holy Spirit, and the filling and the anointing of that Spirit mean, first, the correction of the thing that is wrong, the putting away of the sin, the breaking of the power of sin, the subjection of the rebellious territory to the power of the Lord. But they mean infinitely more. They mean the cultivation of the rebellious territory, they mean the restoration of the thing over which the weeds have spread themselves, and where the briars and the thorns are growing. Not merely that the desert life of man is handed over in order that it may be possessed by Him, but that the desert life, being possessed by Him, shall be made to blossom as the rose. Not that the dry and arid distances of the wilderness are simply to be given to Him, but that He will make run through them the rivers of God, which bring life wherever they come.

I do not want by any generalization to dissipate the impression on my own heart that I fain would transfer to yours. I mean that the Spirit of life brings a man into the realization of the highest and best of all the facts of his life. When this physical part of me is really handed over wholly to the indwelling King, because it is originally also of God, it finds itself, and lives at its highest and best.

The Spirit of God is the Spirit of life also in the mental sphere. It is only in the illumination of the Spirit that you obtain the finest literature, or the most perfect poetry, or the most matchless art, or the sublimest music, or the most correct science. Even the men who turn their backs upon revealed religion, in the measure in which they have been successful in music, art, poetry, or science, have been so in the life the Spirit created. Never forget that in the far country all that the prodigal spent was his father's property. You may be wasting your life, my brother, but the life you are wasting is the life God made, and the life you are wasting is the life which the Spirit of God has created and conditioned.

The second birth is that by which a man enters into the meaning of his first birth. Jesus Christ brings me by the Holy Spirit of His outpouring into an understanding of my own life, into realization of my own life, because He puts my life back into harmony with God. Regeneration is the first fact in the process by which the Spirit of life operates through grace for the renewal and restoration of man to the Divine intention.

There may be some of us who are very near, and yet have never had the baptism of this Spirit of life. Paul came down to Ephesus, and he found men naming the name of Jesus, and I do not know what he saw, but it is evident that he saw something that made him ask a very strange question. He said to them: "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" "Why," said they, "we have not so much as heard that there is any Spirit given." Then his question, "Into what, then, were ye baptized?" And do not forget their answer: "Into John's baptism." Do not misuse that text to preach a second blessing. There is no such authority in it. These men had never been baptized with Jesus' baptism. They were men who probably had heard Apollos preaching the baptism of repentance only. Paul said, "There is more than repentance. There must be faith, and if there is faith in Jesus then there is the baptism of the Spirit, and in that moment they were baptized by the Spirit and entered into life."

Some of you may be as near as were these men of Ephesus. Some of you may imagine that you are Christians because you have gone as far as John's baptism can take you. You need to be born again, to yield yourself wholly to the Christ Himself, and believe on His name, and receive regeneration as a free gift of God's infinite grace. Wherever that is done, the Spirit of life, the Spirit to Whom you owe your first life, Whose dominion you have not recognized or acknowledged, Whose illumination you have lost, Whose energy you have so sadly failed to appropriate, will come back and remake you, not as an angel, but as a new man. God's meaning in you will be fulfilled as the Spirit of life takes possession of you.

But if we have received that Spirit, if we have yielded to Christ, and have been baptized by the Spirit into union with Him, the verse still has a call for us and a suggestiveness. Let us yield ourselves absolutely to the Spirit of life, that all His gracious purposes may be accomplished in us.

Do not let us be satisfied with so much of realization as will ensure us, as we think, entrance presently into the home of God. Rather let this Spirit of life, Who is in us, have perfect dominion, and then every part of the being - physical, mental, and spiritual, suffused with light, baptized with power - will begin to find out how broad, and generous, and spacious life really is.