

Lesson #8 – Christ-Shaped Lives and Spirit-Inspired Speech – 12-18 August 2023

Christ must shape our lives and His own Spirit inspire our speech. “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24).

Sunday: The Downward Spiral of Sin – What does sin do to our relationship with God? Let us sum up the relation between the natural man and God. (1) All have sinned (Romans 3:23; 5:12). (2) Sin is enmity against God; it is rebellion (Romans 8:6-7). (3) Sin is alienation from God; men are alienated and enemies in their minds by wicked works (Colossians 1:21). (4) Sinners are “alienated from the life of God” (Ephesians 4:18). But “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2 Cor 5:19). And God in Christ is the only source of life for the universe, and therefore all who are thus alienated from His righteous life are by the very nature of things doomed to death. “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:11-12).

Monday: A Dramatic Change of Clothing – How do we put on a new life in Christ? We give ourselves to the Lord, and take Him instead. How do we get Him? By faith. “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26). Christ dwells in the heart by faith (Ephesians 3:17). All that there is to do on our part is to give up, to yield ourselves fully to the Lord, desiring that His ways shall take the place of our ways, and believing that He will give Himself to us, according to His promise. Then we are buried with Him by baptism into His death, thus signifying the putting off of the old life, the crucifying of the old man, and the taking of Christ’s life, in whom we rise to walk in newness of life (see Col 3:1-3; 1 Cor 15:10; Rom 6:6; Eph 4:22-24; 2 Cor 5:17-18). It is not simply that Christ gave His life to purchase us, but that He gives His life to us; our life has been forfeited, and we are virtually dead in trespasses and sins, and He gives His life to us that we may actually have life. Henceforth, it is the life of Christ that meets the temptations of Satan, and labours to do the Father’s will.

Tuesday: Unity-Building, Grace-Filled Speech – How can we do what Paul commands: “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Eph 4:29)? We should receive “it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God” (1 Thes 2:13). It is not you who are to do what God commands, but the word of God, “it shall accomplish that which I please” (Isaiah 55:11). Open your heart to “the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thes 2:13); “let the word of Christ dwell in you” (Col 3:16) as to accomplish God’s will in you; what He commands, He enables. Read Ps 81:5-10 very carefully and then compare with Ex 20:1-3. So, we learn that all the commandments of God are but “exceeding great and precious promises” (2 Pet 1:4) of what He will do for us if we will heed His words.

Wednesday: The Holy Spirit in the Believer’s Life – What do you make of what the Lesson writer says: “The Spirit is both One with and distinct from the Father and the Son” – does Scripture teach so? No! The Spirit of God is not a distinct person from Him, any more than my spirit is a distinct person from me. God’s Spirit bears the same relation to God, that the spirit of man does to man. Hence Paul says, “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (1 Cor 2:11). The spirit of a person is frequently mentioned to express the person, as in the following passage. “I am glad of the coming of Stephanas, and Fortunatus, and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part, they have supplied. For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such” (1 Cor 16:17-18). By having his spirit, and the spirit of his brethren refreshed, he no doubt meant that he and they were refreshed. In concluding his letter to the Galatians, and his letter to Philemon, Paul says, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, be with your spirit” (Gal 6:18; Phil 1:25). By the word spirit in both these letters, he surely intended to express the persons, because in concluding most of his other epistles he says, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you” (Rom 16:20, 24; 1 Cor 16:23; Phil 4:23; 1 Thes 5:28; 2 Thes 3:18). Paul mentions the Spirit of God to signify God Himself, as seen in the following text. “But there are diversities of operations; but it is the same God which worketh all in all. For to one is given by the Spirit,

the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit; to another faith by the same spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits; to another diverse kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one, and the self-same spirit” (1 Cor 12:6-11). In this passage you will observe that it is first asserted that God distributes these gifts, and works these miracles; and then it is affirmed that the Spirit distributes these gifts, and works these miracles. And in the 18th verse the distribution of these gifts is again ascribed to God thus: “But now hath God set the members, every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.” From these texts it is evident that the words God, and Holy Spirit, are at least synonymous, of which, if there is any farther evidence needed, it is furnished by Paul in the following text: “Now the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor 3:17-18). Here the apostle shows that because the Lord is that Spirit, we are by the operations of it changed into His image. If the Lord is that Spirit, that Spirit is not a distinct person from the Lord. This agrees with Isaiah: “But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them” (Isa 63:10). This text is to the point; by vexing the Lord’s Holy Spirit, they vexed the Lord, therefore the Lord’s Spirit was the Lord, and not an intelligent person distinct from Him. It is impossible to divide between any being and his spirit, so as to make two distinct persons of them. If you refresh my spirit, you refresh me, and if you vex my spirit, you vex me: just so when they vexed the Lord’s Holy Spirit, they vexed the Lord; and when they lied to His Holy Spirit, they lied to Him (Acts 3:3-4). That God and His Holy Spirit are the same person, will appear by comparing the following passages in the Old and New Testaments. “Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said here am I; send me. And he said go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed” (Isa 6:8-10). Here it is said that God sent Isaiah to speak these things; but in the New Testament Paul ascribes this speech to the Holy Ghost: “Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, go unto this people and say, hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive” (Acts 28:25-27). That the Holy Ghost is often mentioned to express God Himself, is still more evident by comparing the following texts. “Whereof, the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb 10:15-17). “But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts” (Jer 31:33). Paul says, this promise was made by the Holy Ghost, and Jeremiah says God made it – it means, God by His Spirit spoke through the prophet. In the following text the Psalmist represents God as speaking to the people. “Harden not your hearts as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation” (Ps 95:8-10). Paul ascribes this speech to the Holy Ghost. “Wherefore, (as the Holy Ghost saith, to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness; when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years” (Heb 3:7-9). It is very evident from the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit is not distinct from the Father and the Son, but Their Spirit.

Thursday: Kindness (Not Bitterness) – Again, how can we do what Paul commands (Eph 4:31-32)? Paul’s words are God’s (1 Thes 2:13). God’s law is His promise – it must necessarily be such, because God knows that men have no power to fulfil His law. When He says, “Thou shalt not,” we may take it as His assurance that if we but trust Him He will preserve us from the sin against which He warns us. The dead do not do anything to make themselves live; they simply hear the voice of the Lord, and live. So our part, when we are dead in sins, is to listen continually to what the Lord says, and we shall live and be strong.