

GOD'S INDWELLING GIFT

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*Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?
(Ps. 139:7-10)—David¹*

WHAT every sinner needs is comfort, but none need it so much as the loser. He has once known the Father's love, and with a sad heart remembers his lost estate.

God has tender love and sympathy for every loser. The first function of the Holy Spirit is to comfort the sinner—comfort him with conviction. John 16:8. The Comforter first convinces, or convicts, the world of sin, and he is ever present to convict the loser of his evil course, and to persuade him that the way of the transgressor is indeed hard. It reminds him constantly that his peace of mind has departed, and that he is leading not only a useless but a very unhappy life.

The poor loser almost envies the careless, indifferent sinner, and feels at times that he is indeed the most wretched of all mortals. And surely his misery is great. For who can suffer keener remorse than he? Cut off from fellowship with his Father and Elder Brother, and from sweet communion with the household of faith, he recalls the joys of his first love, and mournfully fears that he can never recover himself from the snare of the

¹ "Praise Ye the Father" (70); "A Shelter in the Time of Storm."

devil. In despair he sinks under the Satanic suggestion that he can never more return to the Father's house, where there is bread enough and to spare. He is loath to believe that the sense of self-condemnation that bows his head with shame can itself be used by God. A very compassionate Saviour is inviting him to return to pardon, purity, and peace.

The Lord says "I have blotted out as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins; return unto me, for I have redeemed thee." But instead of accepting the invitation, relying upon God's affectionate mercy, and hastening to the warmth and welcome awaiting him, the poor loser either sinks into discouragement or flies to hypocritical good works. In the end, disgusted with himself.

A poor loser wrote the following words: "I've departed from my first love, and so I've decided to quit."

A beautiful truth of the faith of Jesus is that anybody can prove it for himself by experiencing it, just as you can know electricity for yourself by sticking your finger in a live socket. You don't need to depend on book-learning or even on the testimony of a professor. Before His crucifixion Jesus told His disciples:

"After I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to myself, so that you will be where I am. You know the way that leads to the place where I am going.' Thomas said to Him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going; so how can we know the way to get there?' Jesus answered him, 'I am the way, the truth and the life;

no one goes to the Father except by Me. Now that you have known Me,' He said to them, 'you will know My Father also, and from now on you do know Him and you have seen Him' (John 14:3-7, GNB).

How can we *know*? The electricity flows from the powerhouse into your home; Jesus promised a Gift "poured out . . . into our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:5, GNB). "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, who will stay with you for ever. He is the Spirit who reveals the truth about God. The world cannot receive Him, because it cannot see Him or know Him. But you know Him, because He remains with you and is in you. When I go, you will not be left all alone; I will come back to you" (John 14:16-18).

What Is Jesus Saying?

(1) His entire concern is for *us*, He left us in person, not in order to get *away from us*, but that He might become *closer* to us through the Holy Spirit.

(2) He is preparing an eternal "place" for us, that we might be welcome there. And He will return for us, personally. This will be His second coming.

(3) He boldly proclaims Himself as *the way*, *the truth*, and *the life*, the only-begotten Son of God.

(4) The Holy Spirit is Jesus Himself—Jesus is the first "Helper," but the Holy Spirit is "*another* Helper." Not "*another god*," but the same one God, in the Spirit.

(5) If Jesus had remained here in the flesh, He would have been hindered by being finite—only a few people could enjoy His presence with them. We

would have to apply to His secretary for a short visit and wait perhaps years for an appointment like visiting the Pope.

(6) But through the Holy Spirit, Jesus can be with all believers everywhere all the time. In this way, He is infinite. There may be billions who believe in Him, but He gives each His undivided attention. Stand in the bright sunshine—you could not get more if you were the only person in the world.

(7) "Hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us" (1 John 3:24). He is our first-hand connection with Jesus, the true Vicar of Christ.

This is not pantheism, that is, the teaching that all men are God Himself, or that God is in everyone. Paul prays that "Christ may dwell in your hearts *by faith*." "The life which I now live in the flesh I live *by the faith of the Son of God*" (Eph. 3:17; Gal. 2:20). Jesus teaches clearly, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth in Him* should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

The Holy Spirit does not dwell in all men, but in those who believe, who welcome Him that is, *by faith*. No civilized person will walk into someone else's house uninvited. He will knock first on the door and wait until he hears, "Come in." Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock" (Rev. 3:20). He will not force Himself in, for everything we read about Him in the Bible shows that He is a Divine Gentleman, not a dictator. In fact, He will not come in because of a flippant, casual invitation. We must urgently invite Him. The worst thing that can

happen to us is for Him to leave us alone, as He left the rejecting Jews alone.

How He responds is made plain by an incident in Luke's Gospel: He was walking incognito with two disciples, Cleopas and his friend, the evening of His resurrection, talking with them along the way. He "acted as if He were going farther; but they held Him back, saying, 'Stay with us; the day is almost over, and it is getting dark.' So He went in to stay with them" (Luke 24:28, 29, GNB). They *urged* Him to stay with them.

And so we invite Him in by faith, and He abides with us *through the Spirit*, by faith. And never again are we lonely.

You may be comforted by contemplating the character of God. His character is not that of the unfeeling judge, whose inflexible austerity can only terrify and condemn the evil-doer. He is not the vengeful king or exacting ruler whose judicial fiat inflicts upon the sinner his just deserts. His name is Mercy. He is called the Father of mercies. In describing his own character, he declares that he is merciful, and he places this wonderful attribute at the head of the list. See Ex. 34:6, 7: "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering," etc.

Now mercy is the "disposition to treat an offender better than he deserves." God declares that he is *full* of this disposition. He is *mercy-ful*, "*plenteous* in mercy," "*abundant* in mercy," *rich* in mercy." He says, "I delight in mercy." He delights to treat sinners better than they deserve. He says, "As the heaven is high above the earth, *so great* is his mercy toward them that fear him." We are told that

the nearest fixed star is sixty trillions of miles away. This then, is the measuring line of his mercy. Is not this infinitude of tender and forgiving compassion sufficient for the greatest sinner's needs." And he delights in mercy. Not only that, but he says he "takes pleasure in them that . . . hope in his mercy." He appeals to us on the ground of his mercy. "I beseech you by the mercies of God," "return, thou backsliding Israel; . . . and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord." "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you." Jer. 3:12, 14. How tender is this plea! How touching the invitation! O, what comfort is here for the wanderer!

Again take comfort from the thought that your name is still written in the Lamb's book of life. You may become discouraged with yourself, and with your oft-repeated falls. You may have no heart longer to fight the great battle for the fadeless crown. You may not be on earthly record books; but, thank God, your name is still securely written upon the great church record on high. Your name is retained in the book of life the same as at the beginning. And there it will stand through all the changing scenes of your earthly pilgrimage, until, before your Father and Elder Brother and myriads of angels, you are proclaimed as an overcomer or worthless chaff. Until that great day, despite all your shortcomings, despite all attempts to erase your name by human hands, your hope of life is still secure, because your "name is written there." Then take fresh courage, dear desponding soul. No

matter what you have done, Jesus loves you, hopes for you, prays for you, and longs for your return.

How Can We Know that We Receive the Holy Spirit?

There is a great Enemy who wants to mislead us. In the last great day, multitudes will be surprised to hear Jesus say, “I never knew you!” They will protest, “We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Luke 13:26, 27).

What went wrong? These people had trusted to an ecstatic experience, but they had been deceived. Mere emotion or ecstasy can often be produced by a “high” of drug abuse, or by dancing and beating of drums but that may not be the reception of the true Holy Spirit of Jesus. He asks, “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and *do not* the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). Jesus has no use for false assumptions or hypocrisy. He told His disciples, “Whoever loves me will *obey my teaching*. My Father will love him, and my Father and I will come to him and live with him” (John 14:23, GNB). We had better be sure of the truth. To be self-deceived here will be tragic.

The New York *Times* has published an article, “Beware the Dolt Who Thinks He Is a Star.” Dr. David Dunning, professor of psychology at Cornell University, has done studies demonstrating that people who think they are competent generally are not. “Their incompetence robs them of the ability to discern it.” “People who do things badly are usually supremely confident of their abilities—more

confident in fact than people who do things well. . . . [They] therefore suffer doubly. . . . The humor-impaired persist in telling jokes that are not funny, day traders repeatedly jump into the market and lose out, and the politically clueless hold forth at dinner parties on campaign strategy. . . . Subjects who scored lowest on tests of logic, English grammar and humor were also most likely to ‘grossly overestimate how well they had performed.’ . . . Faced with incompetence, social norms prevent most people from saying, ‘You stink!’—truthful though this judgment may be.” And, says Dunning, this “deficiency in self-monitoring skills” and “distortions in self-estimates” apply to the majority of people.

Jesus is the new Head of the human race, the “second Adam.” How does He view this phenomenon? “Not everyone who saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven . . . Many will say to Me in that day [of judgment], Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you” (Mt. 7:21-23). These people were suffering from the same “deficiency in self-monitoring skills” and “distortions in self-estimates,” and never knew it! Only in their case, their “deficiency” was infinitely more serious than political naiveté or day-market strategy. They were sure they were ready for Heaven. In fact, they were confident they were spiritually “rich and increased with goods, in need of nothing” yet cutting a pathetic figure on the stage as “wretched,

miserable, poor, blind, and naked,” and it was all a case of “thou knowest not” (Rev. 3:16, 17). They were self-confident, self-deceived up until the tragic last moment!

The Rev. Jerry Falwell tells how a “reverend” prayed with Dale Earnhart through the window of his stock car moments before he roared off in the Daytona 500 to his sudden death. (Would Jesus have had a rabbi offer a little prayer and then jumped off the pinnacle of the Temple? See Mt. 4:5-7).

Then Falwell expresses absolute certainty that if he should die, he would be saved eternally. What is a healthy “assurance” of salvation and what is an arrogant “cocksureness” that will only result in hearing Jesus say, “I never knew you, depart from Me”? Those to whom He says it at last will be cocksure of hearing Him welcome them and will be totally surprised when he doesn’t (Mt. 7:23). How can you know for sure that you have done everything just right so as to merit that final “welcome,” that your “obedience” is perfect? Or, if you’re afraid it isn’t perfect, how can you know for sure that you have enough “faith” to “cover” your disobedience?

(1) God doesn’t want you to be wallowing in craven fear all your life (1 Jn. 4:17, 18; Isa. 41:10, 13). (2) Neither does He want you to be foolhardily arrogant (Mt. 25:41-44). (3) He wants you to exercise sanctified, enlightened common sense (Jn. 7:24).

The Bible is clear: God wants YOU to be saved eternally (1 Tim. 2:3, 4). (4) He has “chosen” and

“predestinated” YOU to “adoption” in Christ (Eph. 1:4, 5). (5) Are you worried that maybe that “us” in those verses does not include YOU? Look at verse 6; a wise writer says that when the Father put His arms around Jesus at His baptism and said “This is My beloved Son,” He put His arms around the entire human race, and therefore welcomed YOU “in Christ” *The Desire of Ages*, p. 113). (6) The same “all we [who] like sheep have gone astray. . . . turned every one to his own way,” the Father has saved “in Christ,” for He “hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6). Jesus is already “the Savior of all men,” but “especially [the savior] of those that believe” (1 Tim. 4:10).

There is a place setting at the last great Banquet with your name written on it. (7) Nothing but his own wicked, perverse choice can keep any one from realizing the eternal inheritance that Christ has purchased for him and actually GIVEN him (Jn. 3:16-19; Rom. 5:15-18). Don’t fear that Christ will fail you; but DO fear your own weak, sinful heart (Heb. 4:1).

Of all self-deceptions of time and eternity, theirs is the most pathetic. It would be funny if it were not eternally tragic. Can these self-deceived people ever be reached? (Face it, we are among the group). A profound self-realization is possible only as we can view Christ as He truly is; it’s the job of the Holy Spirit to impart this true self-awareness, for “when He is come, He will convict the world of sin” (Jn. 16:8).

Therefore the first work of the Holy Spirit of Jesus is not to flatter us, or even to make us feel

comfortable like an aspirin pill masks our pain. If there is something wrong in one's body, an aspirin could be dangerous in that it would deceive one into thinking all is well when he has a serious problem that requires treatment or surgery. The Holy Spirit puts His finger painfully on the *sin* which is deep within our heart, and makes us conscious of it. Without the Holy Spirit, it is impossible that any of us can have that welcome, healing conviction of sin because our spiritual nerves are anaesthetized by sin, and we cannot feel its pain. "Thou knowest not" your true condition, Jesus says to us (Rev. 3:17). This is because we do not know, do not feel, the reality of our true undoneness. But the Holy Spirit convicts us of our "enmity against God" which is the root of sin (Rom. 8:7).

The bottom-line sin of all mankind is that enmity that manifested itself in the murder of the Son of God. All other sins stem from that root. On the day of Pentecost the apostles honestly told this truth to the people: "Know for sure that this Jesus, whom you crucified, is the one that God has made Lord and Messiah!" When the people heard this, they were deeply troubled and said to Peter and the other apostles, "What shall we do, brothers?" (Acts 2:36, 37). *That was the true conviction of sin.*

How does the Holy Spirit minister a deep conviction of sin to our proud, cold, self-satisfied hearts? The answer is: by the revelation of the *agape* of Christ at His cross, in the same way that He ministered that conviction to the people at Pentecost. We may wash a white dress or shirt and think we have it clean and white, and hang it out to

dry. But if a snowfall comes, what we thought was "white" appears as a dingy gray in comparison. Isaiah thought he was quite a good person and was satisfied with himself until he saw a vision of God's holiness. Then he cried out, "Woe is me! for I am undone; and because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5).

Until that gift of the Holy Spirit is received, we will never desire a genuine conversion of heart. We will still consider ourselves "good." Speaking of proud, self-satisfied people Jesus remarked, "They that be whole need not a physician" (Matt. 9:12). The only people He came to heal are those that know themselves "sick." The only people He came to feed are those who are "hungry." The only ones to whom He can give a drink of the water of life are those who are "thirsty." No one can be proud, and be truly wise. Nor can one be satisfied with himself, and be wise. When we are full of self-sufficiency we haven't even begun yet to *live*; we merely *exist* in a fool's paradise. The vision of the cross of Jesus ministers eternal life to us today if we will only receive it humbly. There we see that we have no righteousness of our own; it is 100% imputed from Christ. Our blind eyes are opened, and we see how naked we are in His presence.

There is comfort for desolate heart's with the assurance that all God's true children love you. You have felt the sweet joy of Christian fellowship, and have found nothing in the world to replace it. fellowship with your brethren, the saints of God,

how endearing the bond of “like precious faith!” “If we walk in the light, . . . we have fellowship one with another,” “and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

Back to this comforting fellowship Jesus now invites you; the Holy Spirit invites you; every true, converted brother or sister invites you. I implore you to heed the gracious invitation. Remember “whosoever *will*” may “come.” God can save even such as you. “With God all things are possible.” “He is able to save” “to the uttermost” all that come to him. He says, “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” Remember “God laid on Him the iniquity of us all,” and you are one of the “all.” Believe it, and by faith repeat the ever-blessed words, “With his stripes *I am healed.*” Let this be the prayer of your heart, “Lord, take my heart; for I can not give it. It is thy property. Keep it pure; for I can not keep it for thee. Save me in spite of myself, my weak, unchristlike self. Mould me, fashion me, raise me into a pure and holy atmosphere, where the rich current of thy love can flow through my soul.”