

STRAIGHTWAY

And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him [Mark 1:18].

CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

The Witness Outreach of Foundations Bible College
P.O. Box 1166 · Dunn, North Carolina 28335

VOLUME 26

JANUARY 1998

NUMBER 1

Preface to a Forthcoming Book: "The Holy Spirit in Heaven & Earth"

Dr. O. Talmadge Spence

In reading this book the Preface is of great importance. There is a certain presupposition urgently needed at the outset to give the reader an overture to the chapters and the conclusion.

In Chapter Nine, concerning "The Holy Spirit in the Decree of Love," I enumerate the ten times in the Word of God that mention the indwelling thoughts of God "before," "from," and "since" the foundation of the world. There were "things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world"; there was an inheritance of the kingdom "prepared"; there was "the blood of the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world"; there was a "chosen" elect "foreordained" before the foundation of the world; there was a "rest" for God's people from the foundation of the world; there was a once-for-all "suffering" sacrifice from the foundation of the world; and there were names "written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

However, in the Intercessory Prayer of Jesus, which He prayed before He died on the Cross at Calvary, He declares the very highest "glory" revealed in the Word of God. This "glory" existed before the universe was created. The words are most pertinent to the entire Bible.

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me

where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24).

The first presupposition in eternity, in the indwelling thoughts of God, as revealed through the Holy Scriptures, is *For God so loved His Son*.

This great truth reveals the very first glory of God before the world and all creatures were created. There was no time; there was only eternity. This verse marks the time of the indwelling thoughts of God before there was manifested any of the outgoing works of God. The Revelation of the Holy Scriptures does not go back in the past any further than this verse. To God be the glory!

Before the “secrets” were released in the Bible, before our inheritance of the “kingdom,” before “the blood of the prophets” was shed, before the “chosen elect” were foreordained, before there was an eternal “rest” granted to God’s people, before the sacrifice “of himself” was made, and before our names were written “in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” there was the Word of God declaring in this passage the glory which was given to Jesus by the Father: “thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”

We do not start in the presupposition of the Elect; we do not start with the presupposition of the damned. With salvation by grace, elected forever, resulting in the everlasting security and safekeeping of the believer, and the perseverance of the saints, there yet precedes this “glory” of the Father’s love for His Son. We must get back to God; we must commence with God and His own indwelling love and thoughts. We do not start with the provision of an inheritance in His kingdom; we do not start with the blood of the prophets. We do not start with our “names” in a book, or our “rest” in a heavenly place. We must start with the glory between the Father and His Son. For God so loved His Son; for the Son so loved His Father; and the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, shared in their mutual love, loving them. The Holy Spirit would take this great truth, “He shall glorify me” (Christ), in the transcendent reality of this trinitarian monotheism (cf. John 17:24 & 16:14a) and then “shed abroad” this love in the hearts of the redeemed (Romans 5:5).

It is this primal truth, this unifying principle, that would be the eternal Source before the foundation of the world: first, for God so loved His Son; then, “For God so loved the world.”

The primal motive, in His indwelling thoughts, motivated God to both Creation and Redemption. He wanted to share such a “glory” of such a

“love.” His love so abounded that He desired creatures through creation to have His “glory” of loving His Son. As a writer, I care not for the seeming impossibilities this might occasion; this was the eternal catalyst for Creation and Redemption. We believe only the Bible reveals this truth. What a wonderful “glory” this proposes to all of us, and Jesus prayed that “they may behold my glory, which” the Father gave Him. We believe the universe was offered this love and the viewing of it at Calvary, in a fallen world; and we believe those who are redeemed by grace possess that glorious love. This distinctive Love was to be offered whether an unfallen creature or a fallen creature resulted in history. Unfallen angels and fallen man will one day fully know the Love of God.

Sometimes my students have inquired, “What was God doing before He created all things in the universe?” I have always responded: “He was thinking about it.” So, the indwelling thoughts of God preceded all the outgoing works of God.

The Holy Spirit in Heaven and Earth arises out of this presupposition. In these desperate times the saints of God desperately need the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. This is even more desperately needed in the light of the counterfeits and apostasies which are presently associated with the claims of those who speak so commonly of the Holy Spirit among them.

INTRODUCTION

There are two distinct sorrows that I have experienced since my calling to the ministry some forty-five years ago. I was ordained in 1952.

A Lonely Exodus in Sorrow

The first sorrow came in 1969 when I realized I would have to make an exodus from my birthright denomination because of the inroads of the Charismatic apostasy. After giving nine years of my life to the faculty and administration of a one hundred- year-old seminary, founded by a Presbyterian minister in 1896, I had to pray for God’s will of my departure. Shortly, within two years, in 1971, I would be fired by the second president of the seminary because of my fundamental teachings. This was in the wake of the Oral Roberts’ controversy raging at that time in both the seminary, among the board of trustees, as well as in the seven historic pentecostal denominations and representative students from those denominations. I was a member of the Board of Trustees at that time. Roberts, since the late 1940’s, commenced to have oral revelations, so-called, and the Word of God was being compromised by the ecclesiastical leaders and board of trustees of the seminary. Also, questions were being raised concerning other

problems within the seminary staff involving monies and morals. The founder of the seminary, Dr. N. J. Holmes, had been a lawyer trained at Edinburgh, Scotland, who then became an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina. He had also attended the Northfield Bible Conferences of Dwight L. Moody and R. A. Torrey in the summer of 1891. Dr. Holmes had private conversations with Moody from which he gained an increased hunger for the Spirit-filled life. I believe that the influence of Dr. N. J. Holmes was the first of historic Presbyterianism that my family ever knew who came to believe there was a difference between being born of the Spirit and being filled with the Holy Spirit. He was identified with a remnant of early pentecostals who would later, after that first generation was gone, enter into the apostasy of neo-pentecostalism and the charismatic movement.

The second president of Holmes Theological Seminary, Dr. Paul F. Beacham, finally compromised his character in leadership and at last yielded to the neo-pentecostal and charismatic influences which surrounded his legacy. It was a pragmatic act on his part because he did not actually believe in the ministry of Oral Roberts.

In 1966, after being invited to come back to Holmes again and take the presidency, I terminated the pastorate of my home church in Washington, D. C. I responded to Dr. Beacham that I would make the decision concerning the presidency only after the first year of my return to the seminary. I did not accept the presidency; it was never offered again. This first personal sorrow was a theological and spiritual one in leaving the seminary in which I taught over a thousand students in my total nine years at Holmes (1950-54 & 1966-71), besides leaving another thousand friends of my family since my childhood. In this exodus of sorrow I was greatly comforted by the work of the Holy Spirit in my heart and life, leading me finally to be the founder and president of Foundations Bible College, church, ministries, and schools in 1974. I have written about thirty-four books, a number of them involving the biblical and theological distinctives involved in this first great sorrow in my Christian life; so therefore, suffice it to conclude any further development in this book of that matter. However, I must now develop something of the events and observations of my most recent second sorrow of great consequence, some twenty-seven years later. The first was a sorrow that brought a Christian exodus; the second brought a Christian excellence.

A Loving Excellence in Sorrow

This second sorrow came when my dear wife, familiarly known by her students as “Dr. Joye,” suffered a massive stroke February 20, 1996. This

happened in the beautiful and congenial atmosphere of our home during a Katharina Society meeting of Foundations Bible College married ladies. I was telephoned in my study by my daughter-in-law that my wife was acting peculiar in the meeting. Her words became jumbled as she was speaking, and she beautifully recognized the mistake and apologized before the ladies. She, then, without another word, proceeded to direct the ladies to the upper level of our home towards a table of refreshment prepared. It was necessary for her to pause at two chairs, and then she collapsed in the arms of several ladies and was laid down on a sofa in the room. She suffered a convulsion, vomited, and entered into a coma. She was seventy years old. I arrived and knelt by my oldest son and knew that I was entering into a great suffering, myself, the greatest and the most personal of my entire human life. Of course, my dear wife would suffer the most. For a few moments I wondered if I should call 911 for emergency aid at all, as my son questioned me should we not call them. In reality, I was trying to get a word from the Lord about calling 911, for I had seen many times the surrender of a sick person to a secular medical system with the family later on left void of a desire and voice for any other alternative. Once you enter the system, you become more and more under the law of the system. The Lord gave me a passage from the Bible as I realized I was standing on His Word, not looking for God because He was already with me. My mind was drawn to Luke 6:9, when in the synagogue there was a man with a withered hand. "And they watched," and wanted to see if Jesus would heal the man on the Sabbath day, that they might accuse Him. Jesus, knowing their legalistic hearts, ignored the Sabbath question and proceeded to their heart in the matter. After getting the man to stand forth in the assembly, Jesus asked the question, "Is it lawful to do good...or evil? to save life, or to destroy it?" (cf. Mark 3:4 & Luke 6:9). I took this slight encouragement that I should do all that I could to save my dear wife's life because of my vow in marriage. So, believing God was guiding me, I proceeded to call 911. Then the system commenced its work through the local Betsy Johnson Hospital and three sections of Wake Medical Center in Raleigh, North Carolina. Her emergency examination was first taken at our local hospital in Dunn.

At Wake Medical Center she was kept in the Intensive Care Unit from the night of February 20 until she was moved to a recovery section, March 5, and then on to Rehabilitation, March 13, and then back home, March 26. In the first section, I slept almost every night in the nearest room outside her door. In the second section, I stayed each night on a cot in her private room; and for Rehab, I was only permitted to see her each afternoon from 4:00.

My Joye arrived home and I was so delighted of her progress with her memory restored and her speech communication having made some progress. Over a thousand expressions, telephone calls, cards, and letters came to us through all those days, and much prayer was raised to the Throne of Grace by the best people we knew in the world. Most of all we were glad that our home could serve her in a Christian environment. However, I continued to be appreciative for what the hospitals, doctors, and nurses did for us. Dr. Robert Allen was a specialist in surgery for stroke victims and we appreciated his relationship with Joye and us as a family.

Joye had a setback and returned to the hospital, April 16, with something of a convulsion, or mini-stroke and the rising of her blood pressure, but without a coma. She returned back home again May 14, 1996. She has been hospitalized several times in several months of 1997, in our local hospital, through a number of setbacks, even through an infection received from the hospital itself. God also sent me an understanding person in Dr. John R. Mann, whom I continue to respect highly. He continues to be our family physician. However, it should be understood that our family has done its very best to set forth special Christian care throughout this illness of almost one year and nine months. Joye continues in the Firnie Room, a room built by her husband several years before, framed with two sides of glass to view a garden her husband also prepared for her. I probably would have never written this book without this sorrow.

Three Books Needed in Our Time

Every generation calls forth the need of certain books to be written as the philosophical presupposition of each generation mutates. In looking back into history we can see the appropriateness of this consciousness of Christian writers, theologians, reformers, and divines.

In our time there is obviously the need of certain trinitarian truths. Liberalism (Modernism) is built upon a false teaching about the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man. Since those days, which flourished in the second generation after the puritan fathers in New England, the teachings of the glory of God the Father have weakened. We are in need of writings of our own generation to strengthen the proclamation of the glory of God the Father.

In the nineteenth century, in the aftermath of the Victorian Era, the hypostatic union of the Lord Jesus was weakened by presenting a too-human Christ, and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ was diminished. We are in need of writings of our own generation to strengthen the proclamation of the glory of Jesus the Son.

The twentieth century, in the aftermath of the two previous theological weaknesses, has brought down the noble view of the glory of the Holy Spirit in our time. We are in need of writings in our own generation to strengthen the proclamation of the true glory of the Holy Spirit.

This greatness of the transcendence and deity of a trinitarian monotheism is a needed burden for our time. In the first, there is Liberalism; in the second, there is Humanism; and in the third, there is Charismatism. This accounts for the phenomenal horizontal growth of the current forces of the Ecumenical, the Charismatic, the Neo-Evangelical, and the Neo-Orthodox views which are taking the Protestants back to Rome.

Creation: Physical and Spiritual

Therefore, we are in need of returning to the Book of Genesis and the account of Creation. We must see, anew, the distinctives of the physical and spiritual aspects of Creation, and what God meant when He created man after, evidently, creating angels. What did God have in mind in this double-creation? What is sin? Where is the unfallen border of sin? What is the natural man? Who is the spiritual man? What about the Spirit-filled man that is so much talked about in our generation?

In relationship to God the Father, we, as Christians become “sons of God.” Also, we should understand what it means to be a Christian; that a Christian has a right relationship with Jesus Christ. Again, we must understand what it means to be a spiritual Christian; that a spiritual Christian is one that not only has a right relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, but also has a right relationship with the Holy Spirit. We are not only theologically a believer in trinitarian monotheism, but we must have a daily and practical relationship with the Trinity. These matters, all of them, our birth, growth, life, faith, union, and communion with God, are related to the Holy Spirit, too.

Other Relationships With the Holy Spirit

The Trinity of God is related to everything in life, yea, even a life under the curse and the fall of man. He gave us the Holy Scriptures in the original languages and autographs; He gave us His Word that He would preserve His Word, which we believe came through a certain lineage of Hebrew and Greek language copies, as well as a certain lineage of translations. The Holy Spirit guides us through the various phenomena of life, in the physical and the spiritual. He is revealed very much in His precious work in our sufferings. We are guided much by the genuine fact that the Holy Spirit is in the Decree of Love from the Father and Son. The Holy Spirit is uniquely

involved in worship and the altar as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

Most of all, the Holy Spirit is in the survival of man in history, by the grace of God, and the light of the Word of God. The Holy Spirit has a specific work on earth; He has another glorious work in heaven. The Book of Revelation leads us into the very precincts of the Eternal Glory of God!

With these things in mind and heart, we move cautiously and prayerfully into this study of *The Holy Spirit in Heaven and Earth*. We shall only have a glimpse; but, hopefully, we shall be made, by the power of the Holy Spirit, mighty men of God for these mighty days of earth.

I have received three great gifts in this life since the day I was born, and from them came all other gifts and blessings needed to make life's journey sufficient, safe, and enjoyable.

There was the *gift* of my Heavenly Father *to* me.

There was the *gift* of His redeeming Son *for* me.

There was the *gift* of His Holy Spirit *in* me.