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SERMON CCCV.

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MEANS OF THE WORLD'S CONVERSION.

After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord.”—Jeremiah, 31 : 33, 34.

The happy period predicted in this passage has been the desire and the expectation of the church in every age. It has been the burden of prophecy and of prayer. Thousands of the noblest spirits that ever walked the earth, as they beheld this consummation in distant prospect, have kindled into rapture; and to hasten its approach, have tasked their utmost energies. The delay of this wished-for redemption of the world has ever been a subject of the church's lamentation. As we look backward over her history, we see her, in every period, prostrate before God, and crying, "Let thy kingdom come;" while a long line of patriarchs, prophets and saints, moving in sad procession, lift their tearful eyes, and stretch out their supplicating hands, saying, "Why do thy chariot-wheels so long delay?"

SERMON CCCVI.

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“LIVING AND WALKING IN THE SPIRIT.”*“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”*

Galatians, 5:25.

This passage is addressed to the people of God. It contains an exhortation founded on one of those great doctrines of the Bible, which the people of God all believe, and which the most holy and favored of his people always find delightful to their souls. It is a truth clear and unquestionable as any in the Bible, that the children of God become such by the adopting power of the Holy Ghost. They are begotten of God; they are *born* into his holy family, *not of blood*, nor of the *will of man*, nor of the *will of the flesh*, but of God. God himself is their Father. From that degradation and helplessness of spiritual death in which they were plunged God has lifted them up. From that course of prodigal profligacy in which they had wandered he has called them back. The spirit of fear has been exchanged for the spirit of love; and their recovering, adopting, forgiving Lord has removed the ruling power of worldly aims, to give supremacy and permanence to those aims which go out after the high birth-right of the sons of God. Recognizing this idea, as fixed in the minds of those to whom he was writing, the apostle founds upon it the proposal, *let us also walk in the Spirit*. If we are, indeed, of that number who *live by the Spirit*,—who, from being *dead in trespasses and sins*, have been made *alive unto God* by the Spirit,—let us *walk by the same Spirit*: let us have our whole conduct consistent with a christian's existence, with a christian's duties, with a christian's calling, and with a christian's joys and aims.

My brethren, all your hopes for the future, and both the felicities and the infelicities of the past, will conspire for the enforcement of the exhortation.

You hope, after you have done with this world, to go to a better one. We are *saved by hope*, says the Apostle : and both the duty and the privilege of the believer call you to be *able*, through Divine grace, to hope for perfect and eternal joys in heaven. But you hope to attain them, not in negligence, not by inaction, not by merely waiting the flow of some rapid stream, which shall bear you onward to that blissful ocean whose surface is never ruffled by angry storms, and whose dashing billows never excite fear or create danger. No, no ! As wise believers, you are sensible that heaven is a *prize*, and not an accident ; that you are to attain it by *fighting the good fight* ; by going on, from field to field of christian mastery, till your feet shall tread upon the pavements of the celestial city. Wise hope never promises *any thing*, but as she points with fixed finger, to the way, and the walk, and the warfare of the sons of God. Only as you *walk by the Spirit* you expect to reach the home of saints, the *city of the New Jerusalem*.

Of the same tendency is your felicitous remembrance of the past. The greatest happiness which you are able to gather by any remembrance of days that are gone, is found in the evidence that you have made some progress in the Divine life, and thus done something to glorify God. But *how* have you made it ? You must have made little indeed, if you do not know that it has been by no power of your own ; that at every step God has helped you on ; and that, aside from Divine aid, you would now be as distant from the home and country of the blessed as the most wayward prodigal that wanders on the fields of sin. Yes, if you have entered into the way to heaven, and made any considerable progress in it, you are fully sensible that you have gained the victory over sin, baffled the adversary, kept the world under foot, held sweet and holy communion with God, only when you have *walked in the Spirit*.

The happy experiences of the christian are a fund of instruction. They contain many a lesson rich in Divine wisdom, and pleasant for the believer's meditation. But they contain no lesson so plain as this ; that every item of happy experience has come from walk-

ing with God. It is when you have *walked in the Spirit*, that the *candle of the Lord has shone upon your tabernacle*, darkness has vanished, and your soul has been cheered with the presence of God and the light of life. It is when you have *walked in the Spirit*, that fear has departed, affliction has lost her sting, sin has failed of its enchantment, and you felt that you were happy because, through grace, you were God's. You could thank him for your joys, you could submit and not murmur, if he removed them: resting on him, you could exclaim, *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; he maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters; he restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*

Your *want* of felicity, too, as christians, admonishes you that nothing has so much diminished your joys as the want of a close and constant walk with God. Oh! It is when you have forsaken *him* that he has forsaken *you*! You failed to *walk in the Spirit*, and then you failed of the *joys of your salvation*. If you have ever been so unhappy as to find your christian comforts few; as to find your light dimmed; your heart sad; your fears prevailing over faith; and your soul sinking in the deep waters; you found it so only at those unhappy periods when you failed to walk in the Spirit. Your very mourning showed this: oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when, by his light, I walked through darkness. The exhortation of the text, therefore, is enforced by your hopes, and happiness, and fears.

By *the Spirit* in the text is meant none other than the Holy Ghost, the third person in the adorable Trinity. It is by his efficiency that the hearts of men are renewed. Before that efficiency is exercised they are *dead*, according to the language of the Scriptures; —they are dead in sin, dead to holiness, dead in law, and dead to every qualification for the joys of holiness and heaven. But when the sanctifying power of the Spirit is exerted, they are made *alive*. They are alive, because delivered from the curse of the law; they are alive in holiness; they are alive, because they are quickened by the Spirit of God; they are alive by that kind of vitality which marks all the members of the family of God, and qualifies saints and angels for the joys around his throne. It is not by the powers of our fallen nature, that they are alive; it is not

by the energies of conscience, by the leadings of understanding, nor by the strong promptings, even, of that hope, which would grasp possessions more permanent than the unsubstantial pleasures of this world. They live by the *Spirit*, if they live at all as christians. God has *quickened* them. They are *created anew* in Christ Jesus.

On this principle the apostle then appeals to their consistency. *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*: if we are indeed of that number who have any right to think themselves christians, let us *live* as christians: if we *possess* a spiritual existence, let us maintain a spiritual walk; let us live as children of light, and not of darkness. This is the nature of the exhortation.

But it is not of unaided human nature to do so. *Nevertheless I live, yet not I*, is the inspired account of spiritual life. If we *live*, it must be *in the Spirit*; if we show the signs of life, or discharge the offices of life, or gain the benefits of life, if we *walk*, it must be in *the Spirit*.

But this exhortation would be greatly inappropriate, were the Spirit communicated without any reference to our endeavors or desires. In that case we should have only to wait and to receive; action and anxiety would be alike in vain. The Spirit, however, by which growth in holiness is secured, and without which nothing of importance in religion is ever accomplished, is not so communicated to believers. There is a temper and conduct calculated to invite his presence; and there is a temper and conduct calculated to invite his departure.

That we may be able to obtain comfort and growth as believers; that, by the presence of the Divine Spirit with us, we may *walk in the Spirit*; let us see how we may be most likely to secure his continued presence.

I. If we would have much of the presence of the Spirit, we must *value* it highly.

It is true, God sometimes grants his spiritual presence where it has been little or none at all desired. In the first act of sanctification in the renewal of the soul, and perhaps sometimes in the recovery of his backslidden people, he acts without great reference to the previous estimation in which he was held. But surely he does not *ABIDE* with those with whom he is an unwelcome guest.

Where he is not desired, he does not dwell. The Holy Spirit does not stay in the heart that does not want him. And if the people of God would have much of the Divine presence, they must learn to value the Divine presence. Heavenly blessings will descend in most liberal measure, where they are most coveted, and sought, and prized. Heaven, indeed, is rich in mercy; and it is the principle of free, divine, unmerited benignity in God, by which are regulated the communications of his grace. But Jehovah guards his majesty. It is worthy of him to do so. And he will withdraw from that people who do not value his presence;—whose estimations of heart are such, as to do great dishonor to the majesty of God. Let the hearts of God's people set a high value upon God's presence; let them learn to estimate it as they ought; let them prize it above all price, *coveting earnestly the best gifts*; and they may hope God will be with them—will *abide* with them—will be their *pillar of cloud* and their *pillar of fire*. But let them value lightly the Spirit; let them repose the hopes of their heart on something else; let them forget their need of Divine aid; let their affections go out, habitually and most strongly and readily, after other joys than those of holiness and heaven; and then the Spirit will depart,—darkness will rest upon the door of the tabernacle,—the Comforter will go away from the *temple of God*!—*Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost*? Do ye forget, that when the Saviour was about to ascend into heaven, the consolation that he left for his weeping disciples was, *It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I depart, I will send the Spirit unto you*? Heed ye not the fact, that the *Spirit seals us to the day of redemption*? Are you unmindful that we *know we are of God, by the Spirit which he hath given us*?—that we know not *what to pray for as we ought, but when the Spirit itself* (in our hearts) *maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered*? Are you unmindful that it is the *Spirit*, which is to *lead you into all truth,—to help your infirmities,—to take of the things which are Christ's, and show them unto you*? How is it, then, that there can be any undervaluings of his presence? Let us only remember the magnitude of his offices, and we shall be furnished with demonstrations enough that there is nothing else which we ought more eagerly to desire, more highly to prize, more prayerfully and constantly to seek. It is the Spirit which

disperses the darkness of spiritual ignorance, subdues the obstinacy of sin, melts down the hardness of the heart, and opens it to the Saviour. It is the Spirit which *teaches our hands to war and our fingers to fight*; marks us as the children of God; enables us to resist evil, and gives us the victory over self and sin. It is the Spirit which teaches us to relish holiness: he kindles our desires for God; he furnishes us a foretaste of the joys of heaven; and being given to us an account of Christ the Son, he communicates all the blessings of redemption, and reconciles us to the Father. It is the Spirit which joins us to Christ, and makes us one with him. By the Spirit we repent; by the Spirit we believe; by the Spirit we love, and hope, and rejoice. By the aid of the Spirit we make our soul's everlasting covenant with God. The Spirit is God himself, communicating to a lost world the purchased blessings of the redeeming Son of God!

Abundant, therefore, are the grounds for prizing above all price, and desiring with the whole heart, the presence of the Holy Spirit. And every church and every believer may rest assured, that, if they would have much of the presence of the Spirit, and thus, *walk by the Spirit*, they must highly prize and greatly desire the presence of the Spirit with them.

2. If we would have the aids of the Spirit in our christian walk, we must be sensible of our *need* of it. Few persons who profess to know any thing of religion will hesitate to acknowledge their dependence upon Divine aid. But assent of the understanding is one thing, and sensibility in the heart is quite another. That is no sensibility of heart which consists in a mere knowledge of fact. Few persons are so ignorant of what the Scriptures teach, as not to know that we are dependent upon the Holy Spirit to aid and strengthen us for the production of any thing that is good. But still this mere knowledge is not all we need. The *heart* needs to *feel* it. The soul needs to have it, as one of its deepest sensibilities. A fact forced upon the understanding, and at the same time not welcomed by the heart, produces in us no proper homage to heaven. Feeble worms like us ought to possess the most deep-seated consciousness of our insufficiency. Our necessity should be a sentiment of the heart. It should be felt as the most certain truth; it should be familiar as the most common principle; it should be realized as belonging to the very nature of our hearts.

and of our religion, that we are able to take no step in holiness but by the Spirit of God. Without this we shall not render the proper homage nor the proper honor to God. Without this we shall not sufficiently distrust ourselves. Without this we shall not be free from those assailings of pride and creature sufficiency which tend, most of all things, to keep the Spirit of God out of the heart. Feel your need, brethren, if you would find your helper. Realize your dependence; love your dependence. Love to realize it. Many a believer fails, even in proper attempts and duties, for want of this. He resembles the warrior clothed in armor that does not fit him. He resembles the aroused but mistaken judge in Israel, robbed of his strength: *I will go out, as at other times before, and shake myself, while he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.*

3. In order to enjoy the presence of the Spirit, we must have *faith* to believe in the *free communication* of it, as well as to depend upon its holy efficiency. It needs no argument to show, that the human mind will not depend on that which is regarded as beyond its reach and its expectation. We need faith in God; faith to believe the promise; faith to rely upon its fulfilment. We ought to have such ideas of the veracity of God, and the goodness of God, and the communicativeness of God, mingled with such ideas of our own weakness and want of sin, that, like Abraham, we shall not *stagger at the promise*; and that, like Paul, we can say, *when I am weak, then am I strong*. The veracity of God is pledged to the fulfilment of the promises. The goodness of God is as infinite as his power, and is exercised in bestowing. There is a readiness in the Holy Ghost to come and to dwell with true believers. And it is for these reasons that we are exhorted to be *strong in the Lord*, to *walk in the Spirit*, to be *filled with the Spirit*. Such expressions make it manifest, that God would have our faith embrace the idea of free communications of the Spirit; and would have us know that sovereign grace has established a connection between our depending faith and the communications of the Holy Ghost. We are bound to be *strong in the Lord*, because the Lord is ready to impart strength to those who in faith rely in him. We are bound to be *filled with the Spirit*, because in the careful use of the appointed means of grace faith should expect to be filled, and shall not expect in vain. We are bound to *walk in the Spirit*, be-

cause the Spirit is ready to impart to every traveller to eternity both wisdom and strength *to walk and not be weary*, whilst journeying to-wards that better land. In few things do men more offend God, than in their want of faith in his blessed promises. It is this want which makes them shrink from recorded duty. It is this want which leads them to substitute something else in the place of the Divine command. It is this want which often brings up expediency, and manufactures it into a rule of life; which covers over and hides the very command of God; and because the command seems difficult, leads to that rebellion which is *as the sin of witchcraft, and to that stubbornness which is as iniquity and idolatry*. Let us believe the promises. Let us depend on God to fulfil them. Let us be diligent in the service of God, yielding ourselves, without reserve, to all his commands. Let us go where he points, discharging *duty* in fear and in faith, and leaving results to him. And then, and not till then, we may hope for his favorable, his forgiving, his strengthening presence. That unbelief which questions his promise, and therefore hesitates at his requirement, or neglects his invitations, is a great offence against the veracity of the Most High God.

4. If we would experience much of the Divine Spirit, we must be careful to maintain a *temper of mind suited* to his presence. The Scriptures make it evident, that the Holy Spirit may be *grieved* away from the hearts of his people. *They rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit, therefore he was turned to be their enemy*. There are a thousand feelings which rise in the hearts of men, which are opposed and offensive to the Spirit of God: and if they are cherished and indulged,—indeed, if they are not resisted, and baffled, and subdued, the continuance of the Spirit with them is not to be expected. There are *passions which war against the soul*; there are gratifications of worldliness and vanity; there are scenes and societies of ungodliness which must be forsaken by the people of God, or the Spirit will not dwell with them. The hateful, the turbulent, the petulant, the proud, the impatient, the ungentle, the unforgiving; those whose minds are easily angered, and agitated, and ruffled, need not expect much of the presence of that Spirit whose fruit is *love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*. Those who indulge in irascible and malignant feelings, who cherish bitterness, and enmity, and ill-will,

need not expect the presence of that Spirit who admonishes, *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.* Those immoderately attached to earthly possessions, and not seeking *first the kingdom of God*, may expect that Spirit will leave them whose influence would lead them to love heavenly things more than earthly. It is the object of the Holy Spirit to lift us above the world. In his sacred visitations he would prepare us for heaven. His influence is exerted to form us for sacred communion with God; for sweet, and habitual, and holy converse with spiritual and eternal things. *Things seen and temporal*, occupying and controlling us, shut him out of the heart. With *things unseen and eternal* he would fit us to commune. In sacred sobriety, in wise and holy thoughtfulness, in self-possession and devotion to God and to heavenly interests we must live, if we would *walk in the Spirit*, enjoying his presence, and his power, and his sacred comfortings.

5. If we would be aided in our christian walk by the power of the Spirit, we must be carefully and deeply sensible to his *monitions*. It is not enough that we aim to combat and conquer sin. It is not enough that we attend to the duties of piety; and use the appointed means of grace. It is not enough that we endeavor to resist the fascinations of worldly pleasure, and those temptations which would lead us to lay up our treasures on the earth. There is something beyond this. There is a *still small voice* to which we must lend our attentive ear. Christians are not to be taken to heaven in a path they are unwilling to tread. They are not to expect that God will always so admonish them that nothing but the most hardened impiety and unbelief can resist. Sinai does not always thunder. Calvary does not always quake. Not to every incredulous Thomas will the Saviour say, *Bring hither thy finger and thrust it into my side.* No, far from this. There are monitions of the Spirit most wonderfully gentle, and tender, and still. God speaks to the heart in that small voice which agitates no feeling, troubles no composure, and is only the gentlest indication to the adopted child. Let him hear it, let him heed it. If he will not keep his heart fearfully sensible to the calls of God, his God may be offended and call no more.

As you speak to your children in gentleness, tenderness, lowness, and solemnity of voice, when you speak to them of the

things which most deeply interest your soul; so God the Holy Ghost speaks to you. The Christian is not to be *forced* and driven in his path. God only calls him to it, and leads him in it. He must yield himself to the gentlest influence. Not by violence, but by judgment, by choice, by affection he proceeds in the way to heaven. There are times when the Spirit moves on his heart; and if he remains insensible to his influence, the breathings of the Spirit may be gone, and the soul be left to the poisoned breezes of worldliness and sin! Let Christians become habitually watchful for Divine influence; let them cultivate a sacred sensibility to it; let them be fearful of losing the least influence which the Eternal Sanctifier ever exerts on the mind, on the conscience, or on the softened and sanctified sensibilities of the heart; and I am persuaded they will walk more closely and more sweetly with God;—sin will less trouble them; they will live in the light of heaven; they will have joy in God their Saviour; and then revivals of religion will continue longer;—indeed, I solemnly believe they would never cease.

6. If we would have the aids of the Spirit, we must *seek* them by constant and fervent *prayer*. Divine sovereignty has chosen to connect the benefaction with the petition that seeks it. *Ask, and ye shall receive*, is the promise that encourages prayer. And in reference to no other gift is the promise of God so full, so clear, so broad, as in reference to this. *The Holy Spirit to them THAT ASK HIM*, is the blessed measure of his blessed bounty. The willingness of the father to give bread to the hungry child, is the measure of God's readiness to bestow the Spirit. He gives with the hand and the heart of a father. Here only there is no limit flung around desire. When we pray for any thing else, *submission* must qualify anxiety;—*not as I will, but as thou wilt*. But, praying for the Holy Spirit, *IMPORTUNITY* is our best submission to God; *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me*.

My brethren, these are some of the things needful for your securing the presence and the aids of the Divine Spirit in your walk along the way of the christian life. They show you,

1. There is no safety in religious indifference and sloth. Your security, as Christians, countenances no indifference. The best gifts of heaven are to be sought with a holy fervor and a heavenly appetite.

2. They show you that the excellency of religion, the honor of its Author, and the desirableness of its possession, will be estimated very much as you demean yourselves before the world. *Ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost.* God dwells in you. God acts in you. Your unfaithfulness is his dishonor and the scandal of the cross! What caution, what sanctity, what careful separation from sin, and what reserve for God should mark your daily course!

3. These truths show you the importance of improving those seasons when the evils of sin are felt, and the weakness of the flesh, and the worthlessness of the world, and when death and eternity come up as present to your view. They are the seasons when God dwells in his temple. The Holy Ghost is then moving on your hearts, to lead you, by truth, from sin to holiness, and separate you unto God.

4. These truths show you, that there is no offence to God in your being dissatisfied under the absence of his Spirit. He would have you mourn; he would have you seek him by tears, and lamentations, and prayer, and give him no rest till he return. If you feel any longings after God, indulge them, cherish them, and never be satisfied till he comes *to dwell in you, and walk in you, and be your God.* In holy prayer give no limit to yourselves. Launch forth on the ocean of the Divine perfections and promises. Ask any thing that is necessary to holiness. God is as much glorified in giving, as you are blessed in receiving his sanctifying gifts. Heaven is all bounty to the heart longing for its benefactions.