

LIVING LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

1 Peter 3:18-22

Spiritual life is the essence and absolute necessity of Christianity. We cannot have a “relationship” with God if we have no spiritual life. Jesus talked about the importance of our spiritual life. In His discussion with Nicodemus, He said that unless a person has been born of the Spirit they cannot see, nor enter the Kingdom of God. Jesus told the woman at the well that God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Both Peter and Paul wrote much about the spiritual life within us. Let’s start with the account from Peter’s first letter that references the pioneering work of Christ providing a way for us to have spiritual life.

¹⁸For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; ¹⁹in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison, ²⁰who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through *the* water. ²¹Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him. 1 Peter 3:18-22 (NASB95)

Notice that Peter said that Christ died in the flesh and was made alive in the spirit. This is also a description of the work of cross in the life of the believer. As we identify with Christ in His death on the cross we are putting the old carnal life to death so that we can have spiritual life that results from being born of the Spirit of God. This is pictured in baptism in which we show as a testimony that we have died to self, we are buried with Christ and raised to new life that is of the Spirit.

Having been born of the Spirit of God, we have within us the uncreated life of God. This life can never die - that is, it is eternal. For those who are born of the spirit, we cannot say that we are only human. We are no longer just body and soul, but we are now body, soul and spirit. It is by our newly born spirits that we are able to commune with God on a spirit-to-Spirit basis. It is also by our spirits that we can “know” by means of revelation from God.

KNOWING - REVELATION

Paul wrote of this “knowing” that we have in 1 Corinthians 2:9-15:

⁹but just as it is written, “THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND *which* HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.” ¹⁰For to us God **revealed** *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. ¹¹For who among men **knows** the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may **know** the things freely given to us by God, ¹³which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those **taught by the Spirit**, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*. ¹⁴But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. ¹⁵But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. ¹⁶For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ. 1 Corinthians 2:9-16 (NASB95)

Paul quoted from Isaiah 64:4 a very familiar promise that most of us have been taught refers to the world to come as in the millennial kingdom or when we all get to heaven. We can legitimately make a case for this (eye has not seen, etc.) for what heaven will be. However, if we will just read the next verse, we find that these “things” **have been revealed** to us through the

Spirit. I doubt that you will find anyone who will claim that the mysteries of the afterlife are known to them. Since verse 10 is true, then the “things” obviously refer to something else. This “something else” was hidden and was revealed at the time Peter was writing to the Church. The obvious “things” that fits this description are the doctrines of grace, and mysteries of the Gospel. Up until the first advent of Christ and His sacrifice for our sins, God’s plan of salvation was “hidden” and was not seen, heard, nor perceived in the heart of man. On this side of the cross, we have the Spirit and have been born from above and look back on the Old Testament Scriptures and see all kinds of references to the coming of the Messiah and how the plan of salvation was there all the time. However, unless God gives eyes to see, and ears to hear; the exterior senses of physical seeing and hearing are not adequate to discover what God had prepared for those who love Him.

COMMUNING WITH GOD

The issue is Who is God and what is His nature. Jesus came to reveal God to us. True worship of God involves communing with God on a spirit-to-Spirit basis. To do that we must be born again of the Spirit. Watchman Nee (in the *Spiritual Man*) noted the following scripture references that speak to this function of the spirit.

My spirit rejoices in God my Savior. Luke 1:47
The true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. John 4:23
Whom I serve with my spirit. Rom 1:9
We serve . . . in the new life of the spirit. Rom 7:6
You have received the spirit of sonship when we cry Abba, Father. Rom 8:15
The Spirit Himself bearing witness with our spirit, Rom 8:16
He who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him. 1 Cor 6:17
I will sing with the spirit. 1 Cor 14:15
If you bless with the spirit 1 Cor 14:16
In the spirit, He carried me away. Rev 21:10

From these references, we can get an idea of what living life in the spirit should entail. Because we have a born-again spirit we rejoice, we worship and we serve. We are also able to relate to the concept of God being our Father and we are able to have “sensitivity” to spiritual things. The fact that we have an alive spirit then we are able to be united (in agreement with) God and praise Him in a way that is not possible before being born again.

The other function of the spirit is conscience. This is function of “conscience” is not saying that the spirit is conscience. Again, relying on the work of Watchman Nee we can identify several scripture verses that give evidence of the function:

The Lord your God hardened his spirit. Deut 2:30
Saves the crushed in spirit. Ps 34:18
Put a new and right spirit within me. Ps 51:10
When Jesus had thus spoken, he was troubled in spirit. John 13:21
His spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. Acts 17:16
It is the Spirit Himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God. Rom 8:16
I am present in spirit, and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment. 1 Cor 5:3
I had not rest in my spirit. 2 Cor 2:13
For God did not give us the spirit of timidity. 2 Tim 1:7

Nee observes that unregenerate men do not yet have spiritual life, but they do possess these functions. Their worship will be of evil spirits. Some manifest more of these functions while others show less. This does not mean that they are not dead in trespasses and sin. The fact that these functions are present demonstrates that aside from the mind, emotion, and will of the soul that there is a spirit present. Prior to regeneration, the spirit is separated from God's life; only afterwards does the life of God and the Holy Spirit dwell in our spirits.

When man sinned and the relationship he had with God was ruined, the spirit of man lost its primary function which was to relate to and with God and his spirit become "sunken and surrounded" in his soul and the intended relationship between body, soul and spirit was confused. The new birth allows us to solve the confusion and reestablish the proper order of our spirit being in communion with God (and in agreement with Him), the soul being in subjection to the spirit and the body under control of the soul.