

Sabbath School Lesson #1 – The Spirit and the Word – 31 Dec 2016-6 Jan 2017

Christ who breathed on His disciples saying, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22), wants us to receive the same “Spirit of Christ” which was in all the prophets (1 Peter 1:11), because “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Romans 8:9), which Spirit is Christ Himself, as “the Lord is that Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:17), for Christ being “the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45) and “because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts” (Galatians 4:6), and for these reasons, let us have Christ; as Ellen White says, “It is not safe to catch the spirit from another. We want the Holy Spirit, which is Jesus Christ” {Lt66-1894 (April 10, 1894) par. 18}.

The memory text for this lesson reads: “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and we accept this statement fully, and apply it to the entire Bible. The Bible does not simply contain the truth, but it is the truth, and the whole truth. Aside from the Bible there can be no moral or spiritual truth and light. And whatever disagrees with the Bible, whether it be in the realm of morals or of science, must be false. The principle here laid down must underlie all sound biblical exegesis. If this were not admitted, it can be of no use to try to study the Bible.

No one need hope to come to an understanding of the Scriptures until he approaches them with the settled conviction that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” But the greatest abuse of the Bible is its disuse. Next to the abuse of not using the Bible at all, is the abuse of putting a private interpretation upon it. But “precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little” (Isaiah 28:10).

The word of the Lord is the only standard of truth, and the only authority. “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105). “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word” (verse 9). “Concerning the works of men, by the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer” (Psalm 17:4). The Scriptures alone are able to make one wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus; for “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine.”

David prayed to the Lord, “Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law” (Psalm 119:18). The same Lord to whom he prayed exists today, and is ready to answer that prayer for any person who prays it, as He was to answer it in David’s case. As the two disciples walked to Emmaus, and Jesus drew near and walked with them, their hearts burned within them, as He opened to them the Scriptures; and afterwards, in the upper room, where the twelve were gathered together, Jesus opened “their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45). Although we cannot see Him with our eyes, He is with us, for “the Lord is that Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:17) and He is just as near and just as able to instruct those who ask Him today, as He was then when bodily on earth.

Scriptures contain harmony put in them by the great Master. One Spirit inspired the Bible. The greatest hindrance to the understanding of the Scriptures is the attitude which people assume towards it. They come at it in a spirit of challenge. They put it on the defensive. When a plain declaration is read in one text, they immediately refer to another text, and say, ‘I do not see how that can be, in view of what this text says.’ For example, when they read a plain declaration: “The Lord is that Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:17), they say, but the Lord Himself said I will send “*another* comforter” (John 14:16), and they see no harmony. So they put the two texts in antagonism. Such a position shuts off the possibility of understanding the Bible.

By “faith we understand” (Hebrews 11:3). The truths of God are revealed to faith, not to mere human intellect. There is no discount upon intellect, for it is a gift of God; but it is to be subject to faith, and to be instructed by it. That means simply that human reason is to be subject to God, for faith is the laying hold of God. Belief, implicit belief, of the Bible, is the necessary condition of understanding it. He who does not believe it cannot understand; and nobody believes the Bible, when he comes to it in a spirit that will even in thought put one text in antagonism to another. In order to understand the Bible we must come to it with the positive knowledge that it is inspired by God. We must know that in consequence of that inspiration it is perfectly harmonious throughout. Then when we come to a text that *seems* to

be in contradiction to another or to a line of other texts, we can say, 'I know that there is perfect harmony between these texts, although I cannot see it now. I will therefore give them careful and prayerful consideration, that I may see it.' The problem is half solved then. The Holy Spirit – the Spirit of Christ – was given for the express purpose of leading people into the truth, and will still do it. And the Spirit is freely given to all who will sincerely ask for it.

Paul wrote the words of God to Timothy; he said, "Consider what I say; for the Lord shall give thee understanding in all things" (2 Timothy 2:7). How can this be? Well, "For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding" (Proverbs 2:6). That is, the understanding of the words of the Bible is in those words. He who reads the words without any bias or prejudice or any selfish ends to serve, who asks the enlightenment of the Spirit, and who is careful to find out exactly what they do say, and does not put into them something which they do not say, will understand just what God wants him to understand by them. But the trouble with too many is, that they come to the study of the Bible with certain ideas already fixed which they of course think that the Bible teaches, and then because they cannot harmonise the Bible with those ideas, they think that the Bible is a very difficult book. One of the most common things in the world is for a man to read a text, and then almost unconsciously to assume that it means a certain thing, which is not stated in the text at all.

It is sad that our Seventh-day Adventist theologians attempt to make the Bible harmonise with their fable ideas, or to get the semblance of Bible support for their human notions. They made this unbiblical statement and said it is still biblical: "While we have no clear example of or direct command to pray to the Spirit in Scripture, doing so does have, in principle, some implicit Biblical support... it only seems logical that God's people can pray directly to and worship the Holy Spirit" (Woodrow W Whidden, Jerry Moon, and John W Reeve, *The Trinity: Understanding God's Love, His Plan of Salvation, and Christian relationships* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2002, pp. 272-273)). The Bible is reduced to the level of a mere backer of man's ideas. Man is first, and the Bible second – a reversal of the true order!

This method of dealing with the Bible originated with the heathen philosophers who came into the church in the second and third centuries, bringing their heathen notions with them. These men were learned, and so they were at once put into the place of teachers. But they knew nothing but the precepts of heathen philosophy, and therefore could not teach anything else. But it was necessary that as professed Christian teachers they should use the Bible, and so they brought in the Bible to 'support their views.' So the fear of God was taught by the precepts of men, instead of the words of the Lord. Most theologians are thus trained.

We turn to the title: The Spirit and the Word – "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for He giveth not the Spirit by measure" (John 3:34). The plainly expressed idea is that God gives His Spirit without measure unto the one whom he sends, and who fulfills his mission by speaking the words of God. Of course there is no question but that this refers primarily to Christ. God "sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

God had said to Moses concerning Christ, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him" (Deuteronomy 18:18). So Jesus said, "Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak" (John 12:50). And again, "The word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me" (John 14:24).

It was "through the eternal Spirit" that Jesus offered Himself to God (Hebrews 9:14). It was by the Spirit that He spoke. But the word was not simply in His mouth but in His heart. The testimony of Christ was, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation, lo, I have not refrained My lips, O Lord, Thou knowest" (Psalm 40:8-9). The word being in His heart, it guided all His acts as well as His speech; so that Jesus both lived and spoke the words of God. The Spirit was in Him, without measure, both to speak and to do whatever the Father required of Him.

But when He was speaking to His Father, Jesus said of His disciples, "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:18). He said also, "I have given them Thy word" (verse 14). This is because he whom God has sent is sent to speak the word of God. This word of testimony cannot be truly spoken except by the Spirit; for "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Corinthians 12:3).