

The Holy Spirit and the Trinity (Part 2)

The Meaning of the Spirit

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Last Sabbath it came to mind, while Darryl was expounding on John 4: 24 in regard to "spirit and truth," that spirit is the most important element in regard to the whole salvation process. As an indication of this, mankind is surrounded by truth about God, and yet we are not inclined to believe it, accept it, and use it. I want to show you a couple of examples of this to show you God witnesses this to mankind.

Romans 1:18-20 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold [or suppress] the truth in unrighteousness. [You cannot suppress what you do not have. Truth about God is available, and it is being suppressed.] Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them [or to them]; for God has shown it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.

Now, it is quite a condemnation. God is not saying that He has revealed spiritual truth, or let us say, saving truth to these people, but even what He has revealed to them in regard to Himself, His power as Creator, that has been rejected. How much of mankind believes the theory of evolution? That is an outright rejection of God.

Romans 2:14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature....

Now where does "nature" come from that would enable them to do, to keep, to observe some of the law of God? Where does that come from?

Romans 2:14-15 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, [it was never given to them like it was given to the Israelites] are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts. [Paul was saying that mankind is in the image of God, and there is within man a knowledge of that.] their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.

Excusing themselves of what? I know what it is. It is that they do not obey the law better than they know that they should be doing. The average Joe on the street knows enough about sin and enough about the law of God to be able to keep the law of God better than he does. He does not need to be converted to keep it better. He would not keep it the way a converted person would be expected to keep it, but you see, that knowledge is being rejected because there is no inclination to accept it and really make it a part of one's life.

Now go back to Acts 14 and we will see how God approaches this from a little bit different angle. Paul was being questioned by these people because they wanted to worship him.

Acts 14:16-17 Who [God] in times past suffered [or allowed] all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good.

What have we seen so far?

1. We have seen that God has revealed Himself as Creator to the world in a general sense.
2. God has revealed His law to mankind in a general sense as well, in order that they might understand enough that they would keep it better than they do. Their conscience is smitten when they know that they are not living up to it.
3. He left mankind witness so that they know that He does good.

His providence is also known to man. Why do the unconverted keep Thanksgiving? To give thanks to God for His providence. They know. The things of God are not all that hidden.

Acts 14:17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

So mankind is surrounded by truth about God, (and we would have to be included in this), and yet we were not inclined to believe it, to accept it, and to use it. We see then a witness, not only of creation, but of God's goodness and man's nature. This principle of God's revelation of Himself reaches into virtually every aspect of life, and yet there is a powerful impulse to pass over it or outright reject it that is unfortunately successful most of the time. In II Corinthians 11:3 we will add to man's dilemma here, the way God looks at it. This time Paul was speaking to converted people.

II Corinthians 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

In this world's religion the simplicity is made complex by the same rejection process, and it is responsible for the multitude of denominations calling themselves "Christian." The people keep splitting. We are seeing this happening in the church of God, and at least on the surface the problem seems to be technicalities in regard to doctrine. That is only a small part of it. The real problem, brethren, is in the area of "spirit," because all other groups have "truth," but something is powerfully influencing us to divide apart.

I want you to recall and to begin thinking of this a little bit more specifically of the eight quotes that I gave you in my last sermon on this subject from the *Catholic Encyclopedia*. They were primarily from there. They were actually from two different works, but most of those were from the *Catholic Encyclopedia* that dogmatically stated that the Old Testament has absolutely nothing about any trinity. "Zilch, nada. nothing," is the phrase that I used. They did not say

"zilch." They did not say "nada." They did not say that, it was I who said that, but they put it in scholarly language. There is nothing there about any trinity. The same reference works went on to say that the New Testament is so vague about a trinity, that they had constructed it on what they think is the sense of the Scripture, and one of those references, (again it was a *Catholic Encyclopedia*, and I have to commend them for their honesty) said the doctrine was constructed out of what they called "Christological speculation." They admitted that they are guessing on this doctrine.

This sermon is going to be a review of some of the material that I gave during that sermon on Pentecost, beginning with the basic biblical usage of the word "spirit." Remember that that word in Hebrew is *ruach*, and in Greek *pneuma*. The English word "spirit" is the virtually perfect synonym for both of those words. We are also going to look into some reinforcing scriptures that I did not use at that time, and again I am going to say to you by way of qualification that this sermon is not going to answer every question. I am trying to get narrow and specific on this subject, so it is probably going to take a number of sermons as I have time to put them together to cover it adequately. Turn with me to probably the best known scripture in the entire Bible, at least in evangelical Protestantism. Here in John 3:6 is the Bible's basic usage of the word "spirit." It is about as clear as you are going to get. Notice how simple this is.

John 3:6-7 That which is born of the flesh is flesh. [Do we all agree on that? Okay.] And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born again.

None of us is spirit. It is pretty clear that we are not born again yet. It is not that there has not been a new beginning in our life. That most assuredly has occurred, but we are not born again. Verse 8 is the one I'm heading for here.

John 3:8 The wind blows where it lists, [or wherever it wishes, or wherever it wants to] and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it comes, and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.

What we have here is an elementary example of how the Bible, with one exception, uses "spirit." That one exception is when a being, a personality, is indicated. Now spirit, *ruach*, and *pneuma* are the English, Hebrew, and Greek words used to convey what is invisible, immaterial, internal, activating, dimension, agent, or power. The one exception to that usage is when a spirit being is being indicated.

Spirit indicates an invisible, immaterial, internal, activating, dimension, agent, or power. Now, while we were in the WCG, under Herbert Armstrong, we were taught that the Holy Spirit is the power of God. That is a correct but incomplete too-narrow concept. The Holy Spirit indeed does empower, but so does man's spirit. The difference between the two lies in the quality of what they empower us to do. Spirit is unseen. It is like the wind, as Jesus clearly stated. Wind is Jesus' illustration of spirit. Wind is air. That is what wind is. Wind is air, which we cannot see. Nobody has ever yet seen air. What we do see is what air moves, or what it carries, like smog, or dust, or ash, or moving tree limbs, or whatever. If you happen to be watching "Twister," it might be a cow, or it might be a gasoline transporter or something, and you do not really see

the wind moving it, you only see the object flying through the air. Like the invisible wind, unseen spirit causes other things to happen. Now get that *Like the invisible wind, unseen spirit causes other things to happen.*

In reference to a person, spirit activates, motivates, inspires, generates, initiates, begins, begets, impels, spurs, encourages, provokes, triggers, influences, originates, produces, spawns, creates, and fathers what we literally see in the way of conduct and attitudes on the outside. This even applies to God. Turn with me to Isaiah 4, and you will see very quickly that the period of time that he is prophesying about is right after the return of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 4:2-4 In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. [They escaped out of the tribulation. They escaped out of the Day of the Lord.] And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remains in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem. When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.

Spirit is used here in reference to that which is within God. It is being used to help us understand the attitude motivating God's action. What is seen on the outside, externally, is judgment; but spirit is seen as an internal, invisible force, impelling, motivating, generating judgment, with fire representing a punishing, purging, purifying purpose. So from God, a spirit motivates Him to judge. That is the way spirit is used in God's Word.

Isaiah 11:1-4 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, [This is the same period of time being spoken of.] and a Branch [Jesus Christ] shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And [Notice what the spirit will do.] shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

Each one of the qualities of the mind is named to encourage us that this One, Jesus Christ, will give judgments of the very highest quality. So spirit is the general word used to indicate those internal, immaterial, and unseen qualities of mind that energize and activate. As we continue to see this, we will see, both from God's Word and also from our own experience, that they can be good or evil, edifying or destructive, clean or foul, generous or miserly, selfless or selfish, cheerful or depressive, positive or negative, and on and on it might go, but always spirit affects. It moves. It activates, generates, creates, and impels in the direction of its force. Brethren, why are cheerleaders used at football games and at basketball games? Is it not to generate a spirit? Can you see the spirit that is energized? You cannot. It is invisible. It is unseen. And that simple usage is no different in principle from what we are going to see here in the Bible.

Let us go to Exodus 23:2. Again the subject is judgment. Here is part of the law of God.

Exodus 23:2 You shall not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shall you speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest [twist or pervert] judgment.

Here we are going to call on your experience in life. There is a spirit created in groups that tends to pull those groups along with it. It is a form of mob psychology. "Birds of a feather flock together." A milder form of this same process motivates people to conform to certain current fashions and music, taste, dress, or whatever. There is today a cliché that is used which says to "go with the flow," which urges us not to resist the power or the direction of the spirit of an event, but rather choose to yield to it. So they say, "Go with the flow." "Don't resist it. Go right along with it." See, choose to do that.

The choice should depend on its direction, but far too many yield to what is popular or what feels good at the moment, rather than what is right. Sometimes we have to resist the spirit, or the flow, or the power of an event. Those of you who are a little bit older ought to be able to relate to this somewhat. Very well-known Adolph Hitler used large crowds, martial music, aggressive speaking, and dramatic lighting to create a spirit, and he was able to win the hearts of an awful lot of people in Germany so that almost the whole nation walked in lock-step following that spirit. Advertising follows the same course, only in a much simpler fashion, and in most cases, a lot less serious, but they try to create an aura about the product. They are creating a spirit that might energize you and me to purchase their product. Restaurants create ambience to put you into a mood so that when you eat in their restaurants, without saying a word, the ambience in that restaurant—everything from the kind of music they play to the décor, to the lighting, to the dress of the waitresses—everything is coordinated to produce the kind of spirit that they want you to eat your meal in and have an enjoyable time. Are you beginning to get the idea of what this word "spirit" means, and how it is used?

It is very clear from I Corinthians 2 that man has a spiritual dimension to his mind that imparts, that is, it empowers man with the understanding of the physical and material that is woefully lacking when dealing with the things of the spirit realm. We find in other places that this is largely because mankind has been deceived. Those of you who are older in the truth probably heard Mr. Armstrong say this verse six zillion times, that it says in Revelation 12, and in verse 9, "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world." You probably thought that Satan deceived the world through "misinformation." Now he did, but we are going to see it was not all because of misinformation, but there was a spirit dimension to this that made people virtually unable to resist.

Men can sort out fact from fiction. We are intelligent enough to do that, but what if people are given truth but they do not have the mind that inclines them or impels them, or motivates them to accept it? I can guarantee you they will not accept it. Does not God have to lead us to repentance before we will really accept His Word? Does this not mean that He works in a way to make our minds willing to accept truth? You had better believe He does it. I am going to prove that to you as we go along here.

So how is it that Satan has managed to do this? We can be influenced by spirits other than

God's if we have no defense against them, and mankind does not, at least ordinarily. Turn with me to other well-known scriptures here in Ephesians 2. I want to spend a bit of time on this verse because it is quite instructive in regard to spirit. It has been a major player in enabling Satan to pull this off over the entire world.

Ephesians 2:1-2 And you has he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.

In verse 2 Paul is describing what lies behind what he mentions in verse 1, death. We were dead in trespasses and sins. Death is the ultimate in bondage, but what is responsible for, or behind death? The answer is: trespasses and sins. Now what is it that is behind or is responsible for, or motivates sin? This is what verse 2 is about, and Paul names three things.

The first one is that we walked according to the course of this world. I spent a number of sermons on this, but I will remind you that "course" means "the thoughts, tendencies, deeds, pursuits, inclinations, passions, fashions of the world." We conducted our lives according to the system of things that we were born into that does not give serious consideration of God and His way. It has values and ways and systems that are alien to God, so we walked according to it. That is what is behind sin. That is what lies at the foundation of death.

The second thing that he mentions here is that we conducted our lives "according to the ruler of the air," "of the kingdom of the air." That is the way one translation has it. It can be translated either "of" or "in," which is kind of interesting. We conducted our lives according to the ruler of the kingdom of the air, or "in" the air. It is here that we are beginning to touch on spirit.

Now what did we say at the beginning of this sermon? Why did Jesus use that illustration of wind? Because wind is air, and air is invisible. Take that thought and feed it right back into this verse. That phrase indicates "according to the principalities and powers who operate in the unseen world." If you know Ephesians 6:12, Paul brings the "principalities and powers" back into the thought-flow of the book, and that we are wrestling against them.

Point 1, of where sin and death come from, is that we walked according to the course of the world. Point 2 is that we submitted through the unseen rulers, the principalities and powers who operate in the unseen, i.e., spirit world.

Point 3 is where we make a diversion from the normal interpretation given in most cases. My explanation is different, but I am convinced that it is correct. (I came across this accidentally while researching for my article on "Goodness" which is going to appear in the next *Forerunner*.) I want to say at this point that understanding "spirit" refers to "the prince," the prince of the power of the air—"the spirit,"—so we have automatically said that "the spirit" there is Satan the devil. No it is not. Well, that is not entirely wrong, it is not just quite as accurate as it should be. The Greek grammar will not permit that understanding that we have held these many years, because it does not agree with the context of Paul's sentence. I originally ran across this in a commentary by an Englishman by the name of Martin Lloyd Jones. I am not going to quote from his explanation of it, instead I am going to quote from another commentary, *The Message of*

Ephesians by John R. W. Stott, and he is another Englishman. It comes from Page 74.

Since the words 'the spirit' are in the genitive, they are not in apposition to 'the prince,' which is in the accusative.

There is the problem. They are not in apposition. I will define that for you. Apposition is not a word that we run across very often. Apposition means, "by the side of," or "parallel with." In other words, "the spirit" does not explain "the prince." Is that clear enough? It is not *synonymous* with. It is not *parallel* with. It stands on its own entirely. It is the third reason.

Since the words 'the spirit' are in the genitive, they are not in apposition to 'the prince,' which is in the accusative. We must rather understand 'the ruler of the kingdom of the air' is also 'the ruler of the spirit which now works in disobedient people.' Spirit then becomes an impersonal force or mood, which is actively at work in non-Christian people. Since Scripture identifies the Devil not only as the source of temptations to sin, but also as a lion and a murderer, we may safely trace all evil, error, and violence back to him in the end. When he and the mood he inspires....

Did you get that? "The mood he inspires"? So it is not completely detached from him, but yet on the other hand "the spirit" and "the prince" are not one and the same.

When he and the mood he inspires are said to be at work in human beings, the verb, *energjo*, is the same as that used of God's power which raised Jesus from the dead.

Let me summarize for that. "Spirit" here is not a personality. It is a powerful move that impels, influences people to follow it into sin. This spirit works in the disobedient. It cannot be seen, because it works in the mind. It is a mood, an attitude, and it has power. It energizes and brings forth conduct that produces sin and death. We can sum this up by saying that Paul is telling us that before God intervened in our lives, we were controlled from within by an evil principle of life that was contained within the system, that it is not Satan himself that was in us, but his spirit. Now Satan is the source and the governor of this evil principle. He hates God, hates His creation, and has but one purpose in his life, and that is to destroy God's creation by dominating man.

How did he manage to gain control over virtually all of mankind? It is not hard to understand once one understands how spirit works, and to know that Satan has lived all the while that mankind has been on earth. All he had to do was infect Adam and Eve with his foul spirit. He fathered it in them, and this has greatly helped lead them into sin. He begot it in them, with their permission. They permitted it. They used their free moral agency to submit to it, and they were hooked. Then he did it to Cain. Remember at this time there were probably only four people on earth. That was all of mankind. And then one by one, all of their progeny. They unwittingly aided him, because they passed it on as well, because they were now infected with it. They passed it on much like it was a contagious disease, and all of those infected with it have continued to pass it on, and today Satan remains alive and he is continuing this same process,

and he is aided and abetted by all those similarly affected in much the same manner as passing along the measles. Now this has resulted in something, so turn with me to John 8: 43, where Jesus asked:

John 8: 43 Why do you not understand my speech? [*Why don't you get it?*]; even because you cannot hear my word.

Could they hear the sound of His Words? Of course they could, but the rejection principle was at work, and they weren't getting it. Now He is going to tell us why.

John 8: 44 You are of your father the devil....

The Devil had infected them, fathered them, fathered his spirit in them, and that spirit rejected God's Word. It happened to each and every one of us.

John 8: 44-45 You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own [or out of his own mind], for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, you believe me not.

It is a very simple process. He has accomplished this by perpetuating the original infection. Brethren, it is wonderful that his powers are no where near as great as God's, or we would really be in trouble. God has given us His Spirit in order that we might be equipped to rightly discern and to make good choices. Coincidentally, God will use the same basic process when He restores His government, beginning in Jerusalem after Christ returns, the same process in principle that Satan used. The process will parallel the river of waters flowing from under the throne to heal the whole earth and restore its beauty, only it will not be water—I do not mean that the water is not going to go out, I am talking about this conversion principle. It will not be water, it is the Holy Spirit of God. Water is only a type of the spiritual process of the change of mankind, the submission to the Spirit of God. The spirit beginning in Jerusalem is going to be carried by people whose hearts, whose minds have been healed.

The sermon takes a little bit of a jog here, but it is still connected. The Holy Spirit is the essence of God's mind. That is precisely where His power over all things in His creation resides, that is, in His mind. The sovereignty over His governance of and His use of in carrying out His purpose for His creation begins right there, in His mind. The Holy Spirit is the fundamental nature of God's mind. God's awareness of what is going on in His creation is so broad, and yet so precise, that no thought can be withheld from Him. He can react, or act instantaneously by sending forth His Spirit in order to ensure that His will is done. We share with Him a tiny measure of this awareness, but it is usually confined to one very small area like a single room. Now partly because we are so limited to such a small area of awareness, we do not always understand what is going on. Sometimes brethren, we make some very bad judgments. But it is also clear in I Corinthians 2: 9 that God's and man's spirit can interface with each other.

I Corinthians 2: 9-10 But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them

that love him. But God has revealed them unto us [meaning the Church, the converted] by His spirit: for the spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

Paul is going to name three areas of importance to all who are converted. In verse 10 he names one of them—that revelation comes by God's Spirit. In verse 11 comes the second.

I Corinthians 2:11 For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knows no man, but the spirit of God.

By the Spirit of God our minds are illuminated. God is not merely revealed. We are illuminated about Him. Understanding begins to come. The third one is in verse 12:

I Corinthians 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, [We just read of that in Ephesians 2:2.] but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

This verse is talking about inspiration. It takes all three of these things for us to be motivated, but it all comes by the same spirit: revelation, illumination, inspiration. These verses then prove that God's Spirit and man's spirit can interface with each other. They are so compatible that a begetting, growth, and a birth process is clearly shown in the Bible. We will now go back again to Psalm 104. I want you to think of this in terms of God's spiritual creation.

Psalm 104:30 You send forth your spirit, they are created: and you renew the face of the earth.

It says "face of the earth," because the context is primarily physical and material. That is exactly what happened when the earth was destroyed in Satan's warfare. God sent forth His Spirit, and the face of the earth was renewed. Now what we have just read in I Corinthians 2 is applied to a spiritual process of revelation, illumination, and inspiration for the purpose of creation. God sends forth His Spirit, and creation begins; spiritual creation begins. "Let us make man in our image." That occurs to those to whom He invites directly, *personally*. God puts the touch on you so that He begins to be revealed, so that He begins to be illuminated before you, and so that you and I are inspired to do things.

There are three major differences between God's Spirit and our spirit. The most obvious one is that God's is holy. Holy means different. But as you begin to follow the word through its usage in the Bible, the real application of "holy" begins to become clear. It is not merely different, it is peculiar. It is a "cut above." It is transcendently pure, and infinitely good in all that it motivates and energizes. Is Satan's spirit that way? Is man's spirit? Not at all. So Point No. 1 here is that God's Spirit is holy. Point No. 2 is the amount of knowledge that it is capable of transmitting and using, and that knowledge is virtually, as far as we know, infinite as well. Point No. 3 is that God is infinitely wise and mature, and therein lies His morality, His character. Three kinds of power: purity, knowledge, and character.

Herbert Armstrong also taught us that God is not just the great Creator, but He is also the great

Educator. The motto of Ambassador College was "The Word of God is the foundation o