

A Vivifying Spirit

LIVING SOUL is not a suitable expression by which to describe Him Who emptied Himself from the form of God. It is true that He took the form of a slave, yet neither that form, nor yet its associations, are the measure by which to view Him in His tabernacling amongst Israel (John. 1:14). Another expression must be used to indicate that this One, though coming to be in the likeness of humanity, was still the Word of God, in Whom was life (John. 1:4, 1 John. 1:1-2).

Subsequently, the truth concerning our Saviour comes to be that the entire complement of the Deity is dwelling bodily in Him. And its delight is to dwell in Him. His obedience has added lustre to that which hitherto was glorious. Philosophy would despoil us. It cannot despoil Him. Our completeness is in Him. The glory which was His, even in His humiliation, should ever be contained in our faith and in our comprehension. In His humiliation, He had His own capacity whereby to glorify His God and Father. This needs to be, so that He may faithfully and effectively use the further powers which His Father placed in His hands for His ministry to Israel. We perceive the glory of His own spirit from the constant repeating of the word "straightway" to describe the character and the quality of His service as the Ideal Servant of God. This we have in Mark's account, where we are without genealogy or expression as to this One Who is serving.

When the term "man" is used of Him Who was born of Mary, it has not the mere features of ordinary usage. It was due to His birth that He came to be in the position when the term could be adapted and augmented for us in reference to Him. As a Man, He was a vivifying spirit rather than a living soul. This makes Him the spiritual Man, able to glorify His Father by fullest obedience.

Into this One, born of Mary, there is focussed His past fame and glory, yet emptied of the form of God. Because He vacated the form of God, He was not manifested to Israel as the Image of God, yet He was the only-begotten God, unfolding His Father (John. 1:18). By His humiliation He was to acquire glory, but the character of this further glory was not an increase in Himself of intrinsic glory. Rather did the acquired glory enable His prior glory to function with new virtue, whereby He reconciles all to His Father. This is a resultant glory: it removes from humanity's position before God the unapproachability to Him, due to the entry of sin. Because of this acquired glory, He becomes the First out of the dead.

Christ's flesh was human, but His spirit was divine, being a spirit of holiness. This is His constitution in the days of His flesh. He spoke also of His soul (notably in John. 10:15,17), yet, in His case, both flesh and soul were subordinate to His spirit. This is the basis upon which He is termed "a vivifying spirit." All these details should ever be remembered of Him, whether we think of Him walking in Israel, or when in the tomb awaiting the rousing and vivifying by His Father, or even afterwards when He presents Himself alive to the apostles whom He had previously chosen, through Holy Spirit. Moreover, to these we need to add that, prior to all such details, He existed in the form of God. His vacating of the form of God did not sever Him from His Own self, and His personality, when in the flesh, retained its celestial origin.

During the period of the adapting, we must realise that all was in the hands of His Father. Then He was becoming a vivifying spirit. Yet, prior to His becoming flesh, He was God's Son. This fact is retained in the adapting of a body to Him by His Father. This is signified by the word "spirit" in the expression "vivifying Spirit." In this way He came to be full of grace and truth, as an only-begotten from the Father, Whose glory the believer in Israel gazed at (John. 1:14). In this way He became some bit inferior to messengers. But the possibility around this "some bit inferior" really gave added glory, via the suffering of death which became possible for Him.

To require evidence, plain and positive, that our Lord was a vivifying Spirit, when living and walking in Israel, needs much discriminating care, for to what feature shall we look in the records for that period for such a subjective matter? We must not seek the proof in His rousing of the dead during His ministry. What He was, in Himself, is more prominently in point in His living before Israel as the obedient Son of God, testifying concerning His Father. He speaks those words which His Father gives Him to speak. Yet there were works which He sees His Father doing, these He does in the power of Holy Spirit, for they testify to His commissioning by His

Father. In His ministry He was also perfecting the works of His Father (John. 4:34 - 5:36). It was at the finishing of the works, given to Him by His Father (John. 17:4), that the virtue of the glory resident in the Lord Jesus Himself comes into fullest prominence. This finishing rested upon His personal glory. It was accomplished (John. 19:30) when He gave up His soul, committing His Spirit to His Father. And He did this after His God had forsaken Him.

His Own personal glory, that is, what He was as God's Son, though complementing the works and the words of His ministry, actually contributed the virtue to His death. His obedience went right up to the point immediate to His death, when He lets out His spirit, committing it to His Father. That obedience not only faced the manner of death, but it was engaged in whilst He was possessed of spirit which constituted Him a vivifying Spirit. Moreover, as a vivifying Spirit, He had the flawless quality which qualified Him to be made the sin offering (2 Cor. 5:21).

God gave not the spirit by measure to Him (John. 3:34), yet this plenitude of spirit speaks of His commissioning by God. It is distinct from His personal glory, and does not describe directly the worthiness of what our Lord truly became in the adapting of a body to Him. His obedience to death takes its true measure of glory when we see Him as having life in Himself. Life in Himself, even as the Father, is the expression which affords the virtue behind His death. In giving up His soul, and letting out His spirit, He gave Himself for us.

The term vivify needs close attention in regard to its several usages. We must discover that core of meaning which lies within the word, and is required by every occurrence. This we shall find in the literal of the Greek word (zoopoieo), that is, make live. The word is only a special term in regard to a particular topic, and that is only as to some instances. Even so, the implications of this usage call for wisdom. For example, in a chapter discussing resurrection, there are several instances when only the literal significance is the point, for the context of such cases is the individual sentence.

In general, each context in which the term occurs tends to shade the central meaning to suit its own requirements. One instance may call for "make alive." Thus, if the subject of the vivifying be actually dead, then death is to be abolished, and the life bestowed is such that there is no dying. If life is to be given to one already living, then the dying process is changed into a process of living. The word may even be used, not only of the spiritual life which comes to the one believing the evangel, but in reference to the present mortal body of the saint.

In the expression "vivifying Spirit," we should not miss the point that this is a combination of two words: hence it needs intent attention. Unless we perceive the figure, we may get off on quite a wrong track. The easier way is first to consider an expression which is familiar to us. One such is "living soul." We are aware that the word "soul" of this expression is a figure: the part is put for the whole person. This is done in order to make prominent that the sentient is a major matter in the living. In the second expression, "vivifying spirit," we have the same figure in regard to the word "spirit." This second word is again put for the whole person. This stresses the spirit, and, related to the word "vivifying," we learn the special value and character of spirit in this instance. Considering thus, we perceive that each expression, "living soul" and "vivifying spirit," refers to a matter subjective to the one of whom it is written. Neither expression, in its usage, states a value immediate to others. Each expression is confined to the functioning of the constitution of that particular person.

Though the fifteenth chapter of first Corinthians is, in the main, considering the subject of resurrection, and in particular, the rousing and vivifying of our Lord, yet we should not be thinking that any term therein loses its general value. In verse 45 we draw upon terms which are facts outside any question of resurrection. "Living soul" and "vivifying spirit" are used as evidence that there is a soulish body and a spiritual body also. The first man, with the soulish body, was out of the earth, soilish. Yet the second Man is the Lord out of heaven. To say that He was Lord out of heaven is not a mere ornate expression. It informs us that He was celestial as to origin and character, and our valuing of Him must accept this. Though few recognised Him as such, yet that does not preclude Him from the evidence that there is a greater glory than that of a living soul. The Lord had this greater glory in His life, prior to His death.

That He was vivified out of death cannot surely come into this quest for evidence. It is excluded from such consideration, for we cannot infer that because He was then vivified He was not, as to Himself in His prior life, a vivifying Spirit. He was then vivified, not merely that He should return of life, but as proof that His blood was

efficacious to justify. The fact that He was, in His life, a vivifying Spirit does not have objective value to others until after His own death: then similar life is available, first to believers and ultimately to all.

Because of what He was in life, He can also be termed the Inaugurator of life. All the contrasts in First Corinthians fifteen, between Adam and Christ, require that life be truly resident in the Lord Jesus prior to His crucifixion. His rousing and vivifying does not add intrinsic glory to Him, rather do they give Him back what He possessed in life, and so enable us to speak of the glorious blessings flowing to humanity. Thus the following verses are very notable in the foregoing chapter:

- Verse 21 Resurrection comes to humanity through a Man.
 This makes judging a possibility.
- Verse 22 In Christ all shall be vivified..
 This complements the reconciliation of all.
- Verse 45 The last Adam became a vivifying Spirit.
 This contrasts with the first Adam, a living soul.
- Verse 47 The second Man is the Lord out of heaven.
 The contrast is with the first man out of the soil.

The first man transmits dying to humanity, but the second Man transmits living to humanity in due course. To do this, He must also bring righteousness.

The Lord Jesus parallels the fact that the Father has life in Himself, by the fact that His Father gives Him to be having life in Himself. It was in process from His birth. It did not await His rousing and vivifying. Our Lord voluntarily entered death, for He had that quality of spirit and measure of life which was always vivifying in regard to Himself. There was no process of dying to be dispelled in Him. Born into humanity, He was to impart life to it, through His death, and so change humans from sinners.

We create problems for ourselves when we deplete the glory resident in Him, in His living, in order to accommodate the descent of Holy Spirit upon Him on the occasion of His baptism. This descent of Holy Spirit must not in any way be confused with His being a vivifying spirit, for that expression describes Him as to His Own self, due to His possession of a spirit of holiness. That spirit was completely His, as God's Son, and was under the control of His Own will. That spirit He committed to His Father at the point of His death.

One reason for the descent of Holy Spirit upon Him at His baptism in water was to allow John to perceive Who would be baptising in Holy Spirit (John. 1:33). At this time He was also furnished for His ministry to Israel (Luke. 4:18). A major aspect around the signs and miracles is that they were done in Holy Spirit which descended on Him. They were to show that His Father commissioned Him. The works He did were given to Him of His Father (John. 5:20-23). The Son can be doing nothing of Himself, if it is not what He should be observing the Father doing.

There seems to be an extraordinary intimacy and awareness in His spirit in relation to the Holy Spirit, for, even when jostled by the crowd, He straightway recognised and knew that power was come out of Him (Mark. 5:30 - Luke. 8:46). It would appear to be that the works He did rested upon His being equipped for His ministry by Holy Spirit rather than on what He was in Himself (Matthew. 12:28). Nevertheless, from this we must not draw any negative aspect concerning His Own spirit, for, as we view matters closely, we learn that both Father and Son were glorified in His works and words. This is the detail where there is much stumbling. The Lord unfolded the glory of His Father, yet also in Himself was His own glory, silent and unobstrusive to a large degree.

To His disciples, speaking concerning Lazarus, the Lord said: this infirmity is not to death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God should be glorified through it. Yet to Martha He said: you should be seeing the glory of God. Is it not evident that we are viewing the glory of both Father and Son in these matters? Notably, the rousing of Lazarus became a crucial matter toward urging the Chief Priest and Pharisees to encompass His death.

Earlier in His ministry the daughter of Jairus and the widow's son had been roused. These happenings agree with the Lord's message replying to John's querying from prison: Art Thou the coming One? To this it was said:

The blind are receiving sight, and the lame are walking, lepers are being cleansed, and deaf-mutes are hearing, and the dead are being roused. All these details are affirming that He is Messiah. They are signs of the impending eon. These rousings of the dead do not come within the compass of the topic discussed in First Corinthians fifteen.

But the Lord Jesus did speak more pertinently to Martha concerning Himself. His utterances to her are testimony as to His personal glory. In saying to Martha: I am the Resurrection and the Life (John. 11:25), He made reference to the glory innate to Himself. It differed from the position related to His ministry, when He read from the Scriptures: The spirit of the Lord is upon Me, on account of which He anoints Me to bring the evangel to the poor (Luke. 4:18). However, we ought not to base our estimate of His ministry wholly on one Scripture, even if it gives a major aspect. Besides the reference to the spirit of God being upon Him, we also have the position when He places an emphatic "I" alongside what was said to the ancients.

Again, He is the only One to use "Amen" to introduce His statements. Such features are indicative as to what He was, beyond the mere external. Perhaps to Martha, the Lord spoke privately. And yet it was hardly an isolated case, for, to His disciples, He had said that His Father gives Him to be having life in Himself. This, as also the words to Martha, moves close to the statements concerning Him in First Corinthians fifteen.

When He was in the form of God, that form was not an outward indication of what He Himself was. So is it of Him when in the flesh with the form of a slave, the extrinsic veiled the intrinsic, and rarely was the latter the subject of direct statement. But what is intimated ought to leave us in no doubt that the glory of the Last Adam was far above that of the first, for His glory became out of heaven.

In the closing hours before His death, there came the point when He was alone, forsaken by His Father. This truly was the averted face, and it had concrete expression. Evidently the spirit of God was no longer with Him. Then He is going forward in the virtue of His own spirit.

This is a most delicate matter, and one's spiritual mind counsels the utmost caution in deciding the point at which the forsaking by His God began to ensue. Yet the forsaking did have definite reality. If we follow Him to Gethsemane, perhaps we discern its beginning at His praying: Father, if it is Thy intention, carry aside this cup from Me. In the strength of His own spirit, He prefaced this by the words, Abba, Father. And the conclusion issues to: Not My will but Thine be done! And a messenger from heaven was seen by Him strengthening Him. Does this messenger come because the spirit of God is not now with Him, and His Father does not act directly? It is the Son's Own spirit which is triumphant in these closing and final hours. Then to the utmost degree does He glorify His Father, right up to the point when, in a loud voice, He said: Father, into Thy hands am I committing My spirit.

The question of immortality, as spoken of in 1 Timothy 6:16, remains to be considered. Does the statement that God alone has immortality preclude that the Lord Jesus was, in His life before men, a vivifying Spirit? Such a question may not be exactly pertinent in this form. Nevertheless, we accept it because it has difficulty if pressed as intimating the absolute exclusion from immortality of anyone else at that time, that is, even in a dependent sense.

First, we note that the statement occurs in a passage charging Timothy to keep a precept unspotted and irreprehensible unto the Advent of our Lord, Christ Jesus. To emphasise the character of the attention which is to be given to the keeping of the charge, the passage develops, as its basis, the fullest and most absolute aspect of God's authority and glory. Then is appended the word, Amen! Passages or statements ended by this word have, indeed, moved to heights beyond human investigation, and, when closing the resultant ascription with this word, Amen, inspiration affirms and assents to what is said concerning God. In such cases inspiration does not wait for the assent of our faith, but intimates what we ought to do, that is, utter our approval.

Elsewhere we have learned that humanity will yet put on incorruption and immortality. Such information tells us that immortality can be possessed in a dependent sense, because there is the One Who alone can bestow it. To aid our enquiry, we ask: what difference is there between immortality, possessed alone by God (1 Timothy. 6:16), and the Father having life in Himself (John. 5:26)? Is not the difference merely that one verse speaks of the full, exclusive and underived glory of God, that glory which separates and distinguishes every creature or servant into its own category and status, whereas the other verse indicates the Father sharing His dignity and

glory with His Son?

If this be so, then we can readily value the "thus also" of John. 5:26, and, along with it, value the Son as the Father (John. 5:23), both in respect of life and of immortality. Here again is an important detail which we do well to put into effect, for it is the glory of the Father and His Son. Let us avoid that emphasis, as well as that analysis, which prevents an understanding either of Father or of Son. The Son unfolds and reveals His Father's dignity and glory, and, in doing so, He affirms the absoluteness of His Father, for the Father is so absolute that He requires His Son to reveal Him.

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