

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE ONE CHURCH

NO. 167

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 13, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

“These are they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.”
Jude 1:19.

WHEN a farmer comes to thrash out his wheat and get it ready for the market, there are two things that he desires—that there may be plenty of it, of the right sort—and that when he takes it to market, he may be able to carry a clean sample there. He does not look upon only the quantity—for what is the chaff to the wheat? He would rather have a little clean than he would have a great heap containing a vast quantity of chaff, but less of the precious corn. On the other hand, he would not so winnow his wheat as to drive away any of the good grain and so make the quantity less than it needs to be. He wants to have as much as possible—to have as little loss as possible in the winnowing and yet to have it as well winnowed as may be. Now, that is what I desire for Christ’s Church, and what every Christian will desire. We wish Christ’s Church to be as large as possible. God forbid that by any of our winnowing we should ever cast away one of the precious sons of Zion! When we sharply rebuke, we would be anxious lest the rebuke should fall where it is not needed and should bruise and hurt the feelings of any whom God has chosen. But on the other hand, we have no wish to see the church multiplied at the expense of its purity! We do not wish to have a charity so large that it takes in chaff as well as wheat. We wish to be just charitable enough to use the fan thoroughly to purge God’s floor—but yet charitable enough to pick up the most shriveled ear of wheat, to preserve it for the Master’s sake, who is the Farmer. I trust, in preaching this morning, God may help me so to discern between the precious and the vile. And that I may say nothing uncharitable which would cut off any of God’s people from being part of His true and living and visible church. And yet at the same time I pray that I may not speak so loosely and so without God’s direction as to embrace any in the arms of Christian affection whom the Lord has not received in the everlasting covenant of His love!

Our text suggests to us three things. First, *an inquiry*—have we the Spirit? Secondly, *a caution*—if we have not the Spirit, we are sensual. Thirdly, *a suspicion*—there are many persons who separate themselves. Our suspicion concerning them is that notwithstanding their superfine profession, they are sensual, not having the Spirit—for our text says, “These are they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.”

I. First, then, our text suggests AN INQUIRY—Have we the Spirit? This is an inquiry so important that the philosopher may well suspend all his investigations to find an answer to this question on his own personal account! All the great debates of politics, all the most engrossing subjects of human discussion may well stop today and give us pause to ask ourselves the solemn question—“Have I the Spirit?” For this question does not deal with any *externals* of religion, but it deals with religion in its most vital point. He that has the Spirit, although he is wrong in 50 things, being right in this, is saved! He that has *not* the Spirit, be he ever so orthodox, be his creed as correct as Scripture—yes, and his morals outwardly as pure as the law of God, is still unsaved—he is destitute of the essential part of salvation—the Spirit of God dwelling in him!

To help us to answer this question, I shall try to set forth the effects of the Spirit in our hearts under sundry Scriptural metaphors. Have I the Spirit? I reply, “And what is the operation of the Spirit? How am I to discern it?” Now the Spirit operates in many ways, all of them mysterious and supernatural, all of them bearing the real marks of His own power and having certain signs following whereby they may be discovered and recognized.

1. The first work of the Spirit in the heart is a work during which the Spirit is compared to the *wind*. You remember that when our Savior spoke to Nicodemus, He represented the first work of the Spirit in the heart as being like the wind, “which blows where it lists.” “Even so,” He said, “is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” Now you know that the wind is a most mysterious thing. And although there are certain definitions of it which pretend to be explanations of the phenomenon, yet they certainly leave the great question of how the wind blows and what is the cause of its blowing in a certain direction, from where it was before. Breath within us, wind without us—all motions of air—are to us mysterious. And the renewing work of the Spirit in the heart is exceedingly mysterious. It is possible that at this moment the Spirit of God may be breathing into some of the thousands of hearts before me. Yet it would be blasphemous if anyone should ask, “Which way came the Spirit from God to such a heart? How did it enter there?” And it would be foolish for a person who is under the operation of the Spirit to ask how it operates; you know not where the storehouse of the thunder is; you know not where the clouds are balanced. Neither can you know how the Spirit goes forth from the Most High and enters into the heart of man! It may be that during a sermon two men are listening to the same truth. One of them hears as attentively as the other and remembers as much of it. The other is melted to tears or moved with solemn thoughts. But the one, though equally attentive, sees nothing in the sermon except, maybe, certain important truths well set forth. As for the other, his heart is broken within him and his soul is melted! Ask me how it is that the same truth has an effect upon the one and not upon his fellow—I reply, because the mysterious Spirit of the living God goes with the truth to one heart and not to the other!

The one only feels the force of the truth and that may be strong enough to make him tremble, like Felix. But the other feels the Spirit going with the truth and that renews the man, regenerates him and causes him to pass into that gracious condition which is called the state of salvation! This change takes place instantaneously. It is as miraculous a change as any miracle of which we read in Scripture. It is supremely supernatural! It may be mimicked, but no imitation of it can be true and real. Men may pretend to be regenerated without the Spirit, but regenerated they cannot be! It is a change so marvelous that the highest attempts of man can never reach it. We may reason as long as we please, but we cannot reason ourselves into regeneration! We may meditate till our hairs are gray with study, but we cannot meditate ourselves into the new birth! That is worked in us by the sovereign will of God alone—

*“The Spirit, like some heavenly wind,
Blows on the sons of flesh,
Inspires us with a heavenly mind,
And forms the man afresh.”*

But ask the man how—he cannot tell you! Ask him when—he may recognize the time, but as to the manner thereof he knows no more of it than you do! It is to him a mystery.

You remember the story of the valley of vision. Ezekiel saw dry bones lying scattered here and there in the valley. The command came to Ezekiel, “Say to these dry bones, live.” He said, “Live,” and the bones came together, “bone to his bone, and flesh came upon them.” But as yet they did not live. “Prophesy, son of man. Say to the wind, breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” They looked just like life; there was flesh and blood there; there were the eyes, and hands and feet. But when Ezekiel had spoken, there was a mysterious something given which men call life and it was given in a mysterious way, like the blowing of the wind. It is even so today. Unconverted and ungodly persons may be very

moral and excellent—they are like the dry bones when they are put together and clothed with flesh and blood. But to make them live *spiritually*, it needs the divine inspiration from the breath of the Almighty, the divine Spirit, and the divine wind to blow on them, and then they live! Say, my hearer, have you ever had any supernatural influence on your heart? For if not, I may seem to be harsh with you. But I am faithful. If you have never had more than nature in your heart, you are “in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.” No, sir, sneer not at that utterance! It is as true as this Bible; for it is from this Bible it was taken and for proof thereof hear me! “Except a man be born-again (from above) of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” What say you to that? It is in vain for you to talk of making yourself to be born-again. You can not be born-again except by the Spirit, and you will perish unless you are! You see, then, the first effect of the Spirit and by that you may answer the question.

2. In the next place, the Spirit in the Word of God is often compared to *fire*. After the Spirit, like the wind, has made the dead sinner live, then comes the Spirit like fire. Now fire has a searching and tormenting power. It is purifying, but it purifies by a terrible process. Now after the Holy Spirit has given us the life of Christianity, there immediately begins a burning in our heart—the Lord searches and tries our reins and lights a candle within our spirits which discovers the wickedness of our nature and the loathsomeness of our iniquities. Say, my hearer, do you know anything about that fire in your heart? For if not, you have not yet received the Spirit! To explain what I mean, let me just tell a piece of my own experience by way of illustrating the fiery effects of the Spirit. I lived careless and thoughtless. I could indulge in sin as well as others and did do so. Sometimes my conscience pricked me, but not enough to make me cease from vice. I could indulge in transgression and I could love it—not so much as others loved it—my early training would not let me do that—but still enough to prove that my heart was debased and corrupt! One time something more than conscience pricked me; I knew not, then, what it was. I was like Samuel, when the Lord called him. I heard the voice, but I knew not from where it came. A stirring began in my heart and I began to feel that in the sight of God I was a lost, ruined and condemned sinner. That conviction I could not shake off. Do what I might, it followed me. If I sought to amuse my mind and take it off from serious thoughts, it was of no use. I was obliged to still carry about with me a heavy burden on my back. I went to my bed and there I dreamed about hell and about “the wrath to come.” I woke up and this dreary nightmare, this oppressive burden, still brooded on me! What could I do? I renounced first one vicious habit—then another—it mattered not. All this was like pulling one firebrand from a flame that fed itself with blazing forests.

Do what I might, my conscience found no rest. Up to the house of God I went to hear the gospel. There was no gospel for me. The fire burned, but the more fiercely and the very breath of the gospel seemed to fan the flame. Away I went to my chamber and my closet to pray—the heavens were like brass and the windows of the sky were barred against me. No answer could I get. The fire burned more vehemently. Then I thought, “I will not always live—would God I had never been born!” But I dared not die, for there was hell when I was dead. And I dared not live, for life had become intolerable. Still the fire blazed right vehemently till at last I came to this resolve—“If there is salvation in Christ, I will have it. I have nothing of my own to trust to. I do this hour, O God, renounce my sin and renounce my own righteousness, too.” And the fire blazed again and burned up all my good works, yes—and my sins with them! And then I saw that all this burning was to bring me to Christ—and oh, the joy and gladness of my heart when Jesus came and sprinkled water on the flame and said, “I have bought you with My blood; put your trust in Me. I will do for you what you cannot do for yourself. I will take your sins away. I will clothe you with a spotless robe of righteousness. I will guide your entire journey through and land you, at last in heaven.” Say, my dear hearer, do you know anything about the Spirit of burning? For if not, again I say, I am not harsh, I am but true—if you have never felt this, you know not the Spirit!

3. To proceed a little further. When the Spirit has thus quickened the soul and convicted it of sin, then He comes under another metaphor. He comes under the metaphor of *oil*. The Holy Spirit is very frequently in Scripture compared to oil. “You anoint my head with oil, my cup runs over.” Ah, brothers and sisters, though the beginning of the Spirit is by fire, it does not end there! We may be first of all convicted and brought to Christ by misery. But when we get to Christ there is no misery in Him and our sorrow results from not getting close enough to Him! The Holy Spirit comes, like the Good Samaritan, and pours in the oil and the wine. And oh, what oil it is with which He anoints our head and with which He heals our wounds! How soft the liniments which He binds round our bruises! How blessed the eye salve with which He anoints our eyes! How heavenly the ointment with which He binds up our sores and wounds and bruises and makes us whole and sets our feet upon a rock and establishes our goings! The Spirit, after He has convicted, begins to comfort. And you that have felt the comforting power of the Holy Spirit will bear me witness there is no comforter like He that is the Paraclete! Oh, bring the music, the voice of song and the sound of harps! They are both as vinegar upon niter to him who has a heavy heart. Bring me the enchantments of the magic world and all the enjoyments of its pleasures—they do but torment the soul and prick it with many thorns! But oh, Spirit of the living God, when You blow upon the heart, there is not a wave of that tempestuous sea which does not sleep forever when You bid it be still! There is not one single breath of the proud hurricane and tempest which does not cease to howl and which does not lie still when You say to it, “Peace be unto you. Your sins are forgiven you.” Say, do you know the Spirit under the figure of oil? Have you felt Him at work in your spirits, comforting you, anointing your head, making you glad and causing you to rejoice?

There are many people who never felt this. They hope they are religious. But their religion never makes them happy. There are scores of professors who have just enough religion to make them miserable! Let them be afraid that they have any religion at all, for religion makes people happy. When it has its full sway with man, it makes him glad. It may begin in agony, but it does not end there! Say, have you ever had your heart leaping for joy? Have your lips ever warbled songs of ecstatic praise? Do your eyes ever flash the fire of joy? If these things are not so, I fear lest you are still without God and without Christ, for where the Spirit comes, His fruits are joy, peace, love, confidence and assurance forever!

4. Bear with me once more. I have to show you one more figure of the Spirit and by that; also, you will be able to ascertain whether you are under His operation. When the Spirit has acted as wind, as fire and as oil, He then acts like *water*. We are told that we are “born-again of water and of the Spirit.” Now I do not think you foolish enough to need that I should say that no water, either of immersion or of sprinkling, can in the least degree operate in the *salvation* of a soul. There may be some few poor creatures whose heads were put on their shoulders the wrong way, who still believe that a few drops of water from a priest’s hands can regenerate souls! There may be such a few, but I hope the race will soon die out. We trust that the day will come when all those gentry will have no “other gospel” to preach in our churches but will have clean gone over to Rome and when that terrible spot upon the Protestant Church, called Puseyism, will have been cut out like a cancer and torn out by its very roots. The sooner we get rid of that the better! And whenever we hear of any of them going over to Rome, let them go—I wish we could as easily get rid of the devil—they may go together—we do not want either of them in the Protestant Church! But the Holy Spirit, when He comes in the heart, comes like water. That is to say, He comes to purify the soul. He who today lives as foul as he did before his pretended conversion is a hypocrite and a liar! He who this day loves sin and lives in it just as he was likely to do, let him know that the truth is not in him, but he has received the strong delusion to believe a lie! God’s people are a holy people. God’s Spirit works by love and purifies the soul. Once let it get into our hearts and it will have no rest till it has turned every sin out! God’s Holy Spirit and man’s sin cannot live together

peaceably—they may both be in the same heart—but they cannot both reign there, nor can they both be quiet there, for “the Spirit lusts against the flesh and the flesh lusts against the Spirit.” They cannot rest, but there will be a perpetual warring in the soul so that the Christian will have to cry, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” But in due time the Spirit will drive out all sin, and will present us blameless before the throne of His Majesty with exceedingly great joy.

Now, my hearer, answer this question for yourself and not for another man. Have you received this Spirit? Answer me, anyway—if it is with a scoff, answer me. If you sneer and say, “I know nothing of your enthusiastic rant,” be it so, sir—say, “No,” then! It may be you care not to reply at all. I beseech you do not put away my entreaty! Yes or no? Have you received the Spirit? “Sir, no man can find fault with my character. I believe I shall enter heaven through my own virtues.” That is not the question, sir! Have you received the Spirit? All that you say, you may have done. But if you have left the other undone and have not received the Spirit, it will go ill with you at last. Have you had a supernatural operation upon your own heart? Have you been made a new man or woman in Christ Jesus! For if not, depend on it, as God’s Word is true, you are out of Christ, and dying as you are you will be shut out of heaven, be you who you may and what you may!

II. Thus I have tried to help you to answer the first question—the inquiry—have we received the Spirit? And this brings me to the CAUTION. He that has not received the Spirit is said to be sensual. Oh, what a gulf there is between the least Christian and the greatest moralist! What a wide distinction there is between the greatest professor destitute of divine grace and the least of God’s believers who has grace in his heart! As great a difference as there is between light and darkness, between death and life, between heaven and hell is there between a saint and a sinner, for mark what my text says—in no very polite phrase—that if we have not the Spirit we are sensual. “Sensual!” says one. “Well, I am not a converted man—I don’t pretend to be—but I am not sensual.” Well, friend, and it is very likely that you are not—not in the common acceptance of the term, sensual. But understand that this word, in the Greek, really means what an English word like this would mean, if we had such a one—*soulish*. We have not such a word—we need such a one, though. There is a great distinction between mere animals and men—man has a soul and the mere animal has none. There is another distinction between mere men and a converted man. The converted man has the Spirit—the unconverted man has none. He is a soulish man—not a spiritual man. He has got no further than mere nature and has no inheritance in the spiritual kingdom of grace. Strange it is that soulish and sensual should, after all, mean the same! Friend, you have not the Spirit. Then you are nothing better—be you what you are, or whatever you may be—than the fall of Adam left you! That is to say, you are a fallen creature, having only capacities to live here in sin and to live forever in hell. You have not the capacity to live in heaven at all, for you have no Spirit and, therefore, you are unable to know or enjoy *spiritual things*! And mark you, a man may be in this state and be a sensual man and yet he may have all the virtues that could grace a Christian. But with all these—if he has not the Spirit—he has got not an inch further than where Adam’s fall left him—that is, condemned and under the curse. Yes, and he may attend to religion with all his might—he may take the sacrament and be baptized and may be the most devout professor. But if he has not the Spirit, he has not gone forward a solitary inch from where he was, for he is still in “the bonds of iniquity,” a lost soul! No, further, he may pick up religious phrases till he may talk very fast about religion. He may read biographies till he seems to be a deep taught child of God. He may be able to write an article upon the deep experience of a believer—but if this experience is not his own, if he has not received it by the Spirit of the living God, he is still nothing more than a carnal man and heaven is to him a place to which there is no entrance! No, further—he might go as far as to become a minister of the gospel and a successful minister, too. And God may bless the word that he preaches to the salvation of sinners. But

unless he has received the Spirit—be he as eloquent as Apollos, and as earnest as Paul—he is nothing more than a mere soulish man without capacity for spiritual things.

No, to crown all, he might even have the power of working miracles as Judas had—he might even be received into the church as a believer as was Simon Magus; and after all that—though he had cast out devils, though he had healed the sick, though he had worked miracles—he will have the gates of heaven shut in his teeth if he has not received the Spirit! This is the essential thing—without which all others are in vain: the reception of the Spirit of the living God! It is a searching truth of God, is it not, my friends? Do not run away from it; if I am preaching a lie to you, reject it. But if this is a truth which I can substantiate by Scripture, I beseech you, rest not till you have answered this question—Have you the Spirit living, dwelling, and working in your heart?

III. This brings me, in the third place, to THE SUSPICION. How singular that “separation” should be the opposite of having the Spirit. Listen! I hear a gentleman saying, “Oh, I like to hear you preach smartly and sharply. I am persuaded, sir, there are a great many people in the church who ought not to be there. And so I, because there is such a corrupt mixture in the church, have determined not to join anywhere at all—I do not think that the Church of Christ, nowadays, is at all clean and pure enough to allow of my joining with it. But at least, sir, I did join a church once, but I made such a deal of noise in it they were very glad when I went away. And now I am just like David’s men—I am one that is in debt and discontented, and I go round to hear all new preachers that arise. I have heard you now these three months—I mean to go and hear someone else in a very little time if you do not say something to flatter me. But I am quite sure I am one of God’s special elect. I don’t join any church because a church is not good enough for me. I don’t become a member of any denomination, because they are all wrong—every one of them.” Listen to me, sir, I have something to tell you that will not please you. “*These are they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.*” I hope you enjoy the text! It certainly belongs to you, above every man in the world! “*These are they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.*” When I read this over I thought to myself, there are some who say, “Well, you are a dissenter, how do you make this agreeable with the text, ‘*These are they who separate themselves.*’” You are separated from the Church of England! Ah, my friends, that a man may be, and be all the better for it, but the separation here intended is separation from the *one universal Church of Christ*. The Church of England was not known in Jude’s day—so the apostle did not allude to that. “*These are they who separate themselves*”—that is from the Church of Christ—from the great universal body of the elect!

Moreover, let us just say one thing—we did not separate ourselves—we were turned out. Dissenters did not separate themselves from the Church of England, from the Episcopal Church! When the Act of Uniformity was passed, they were forcibly turned out of their pulpits. Our forefathers were as sound churchmen as any in the world—but they could not take in all the errors of the Prayer Book, and they were, therefore, hounded to their graves by the intolerance of the conforming professors. So they did not separate themselves. Moreover, we do not separate ourselves. There is not a Christian beneath the scope of God’s heaven from whom I am separated. At the Lord’s Table I always invite all churches to come and sit down, and commune with us. If any man were to tell me that I am separate from the Episcopalian, the Presbyterian, or the Methodist, I would tell him he did not know me, for I love them fervently with a pure heart, and I am not separate from them. I may hold different views from them, and in that point truly I may be said to be separate, but I am not separate in heart. I will work with them—I will work with them heartily! No, though my Church of England brother sends me, as he has done, a summons to pay a church tax that I cannot in conscience pay, I will still love him. And if he takes chairs and tables, it matters not—I will love him for all that! And if there is a ragged school or anything else for which I can work with him to promote the glory of God, therein will I unite with him with all my heart! I think this bears rather hard on our friends—the Strict Communion Baptists. I should not like to

say anything hard against them, for they are about the best people in the world; but they really do separate themselves from the great body of Christ's people. The Spirit of the living God will not let them do this really, but they do it professedly—they separate themselves from the great Universal Church. They say they will not commune with it; and if anyone comes to their table who has not been baptized, they turn him away. They certainly "separate." I do not believe it is willful schism that makes them thus act, but at the same time I think the old man within has some hand in it.

Oh, how my heart loves the doctrine of the one church. The nearer I get to my Master in prayer and communion, the closer am I knit to all His disciples! The more I see of my own errors and failings, the more ready I am to deal gently with them who I believe to be erring. The pulse of Christ's body is communion; and woe to the church that seeks to cure the ills of Christ's body by stopping its pulse! I think it sin to refuse to commune with anyone who is a member of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. I desire this morning to preach the unity of Christ's Church. I have sought to use the fan to blow away the chaff. I have said no man belongs to Christ's Church unless he has the Spirit; but, if he has the Spirit, woe be to the man who separates himself from him! Oh, I should think myself grossly at fault if at the foot of these stairs I should meet a truly converted child of God who called himself a Primitive Methodist, or a Wesleyan, or a Churchman, or an Independent, and I should say, "No, sir, you do not agree with me on certain points; I believe you are a child of God, but I will have nothing to do with you." I would then think that this text would bear very hard on me. "These are they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." But would we do so, beloved? No, we would give them both our hands, and say, God speed to you in your journey to heaven. So long as you have got the Spirit, we are one family, and we will not be separate from one another! God grant the day may come when every wall of separation shall be beaten down! Look how to this day we are separate. There, you will find a Baptist who could not say a good word to a Paedo-Baptist if you were to give him a world! You find to this day Episcopalians who hate that ugly word, "Dissent"; and it is enough for them that a Dissenter has done a thing; then they will not do it, be it ever so good!

Ah, and furthermore, there are some to be found in the Church of England who will not only hate dissent, but hate one another into the bargain! Men are to be found who cannot let brother ministers of their own church preach in their parish! What an anachronism such men are! They would seem to have been sent into the world in our time purely by mistake—their proper era would have been the time of the dark ages! If they had lived then, what fine persecutors they would have made! What splendid fellows they would have been to have helped to poke the fire in Smithfield! But they are quite out of date in these times, and I look upon such a curious clergyman in the same way that I do upon a Dodo—as an extraordinary animal whose race is almost, if not quite extinct. Well, you may look, and look and wonder. The animal will be soon extinct. It will not be long, I trust, before not only the Church of England shall love itself, but when all who love the Lord Jesus shall be ready to preach in each other's pulpits, preaching the same truth, holding the same faith, and mightily contending for it! Then shall the world "see how these Christians love one another." And then shall it be known in heaven that Christ's kingdom has come, and that His will is about to be done on earth as it is in heaven!

My hearer, do you belong to the church? For out of the church there is no salvation! But mark what the church is. It is not the Episcopalian, Baptist, or Presbyterian—the church is a company of men and women, and children who have received the Spirit! If you cannot say you have the Spirit, go your way and tremble; go your way, and think of your lost condition; and may Jesus by His Spirit so bless you that you may be led to renounce your works and ways with grief, and fly to Him who died upon the cross, and find a shelter there from the wrath of God!

I may have said some rough things this morning, but I am not given much to cutting and trimming, and I do not suppose I shall begin to learn that art now. If the thing is untrue, it is with you to reject it. If

it is true, at your own peril reject what God stamps with divine authority; may the blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit rest upon the one church of Israel's one Jehovah. Amen and Amen.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**

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