

Spiritual Manhood

by T. Austin-Sparks

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Chapter 3 – Manhood according to God (cont.)

Chapter 4 – Manhood in the Spirit

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(Unfortunately messages 1 and 2 of this series are missing)

Chapter 3 – Manhood according to God (cont.)

Reading: Ezekiel 1:2-2:1.

I have it on my heart to say a little more about manhood according to God. Those of you who are familiar with this book of prophecies by Ezekiel will know that there are three all-dominating words from beginning to end. The first is the word 'man'. It is almost monotonous to come so repeatedly and frequently upon this word 'man'. It begins here with the man above the throne, and then follows this constant use of the title 'Son of man'. I suggest to you that you just go through with that, and you will find that it occurs some eighty times in these prophecies alone — 'Son of man'. And the word is used in other connections. The heavenly messenger, the angel, is called the man, the man with the measuring line. In this figure or representation 'the living ones' in the two places where it occurs in these prophecies, the predominant feature is that of the man, the likeness of a man, and then other features, but that stands by itself as over all — the likeness of a man. You will notice the punctuation is perfectly right there. It sets the likeness of a man by itself, and the other things are subservient to that. The lion, the ox, and the eagle are subservient to the man feature.

The second great word in these prophecies is 'the Spirit'. Again we find the Spirit, or reference to the Spirit, recurrent throughout, and again something almost of a monotony as the prophet says — 'The Spirit lifted me up', 'the Spirit took me out', 'the Spirit brought me out', 'the Spirit set me down', and so on right through. Eighteen times reference is made definitely to the Spirit with many subservient references.

And then the third great word is 'life', the Spirit of life, the living ones. Life in the wheels, the river of life, the trees of life. "*Son of man, can these dry bones live?*" You see, it is the great issue.

Now all that is quite a lot of detail, but if we note that, we are able to come to this conclusion, that if certain words overwhelm everything else that is said and stand so predominantly in the whole narrative, we know what it is all about, and inasmuch as man exceeds everything else in these prophecies — and may I say that Ezekiel is only representative of the Word of God, the universal interest that the Bible shows in man. Inasmuch as man predominates here, we are compelled to come to this conclusion and to this position that God has got something to say about manhood; it is manhood that is really in view, but manhood according to God's mind. So we spend our little time in meditating upon the divine thought concerning man and manhood.

The Christian's Bewilderment

Again we find it is necessary to adjust some of our ideas in relation to Christianity, the Christian and what the Christian life means, for there is a serious defect in the common and current ideas about being a Christian. The general, and for many, almost entire, conception of a Christian is that he is one who has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and is saved. Of course, there follow certain differences in his consciousness, outlook, interests, activities and hope. All that is perfectly true and right, but withal when that is so and we are Christians on that basis and in those terms, there comes a time in the life of a truly heaven-born, born from above child of God, when he or she does not know where he is, and the Christian life becomes full of complications, perplexities and problems, full of bewilderment. It sounds a terrible thing to say, but I am quite sure that

many of you can corroborate that from your experience. Very much of what the young Christian finds and discovers in the Christian life is very disconcerting and sometimes very distressing. What he finds in the present system of Christianity brings disillusionment and disappointment which throws him into this state of real concern and perplexity. The Christian life is not, after all, such a simple, straightforward, easygoing thing as we expected it to be. All is not as clear as we thought it would be. We have come into a realm of a tremendous number of cross-currents, conflicting elements, and we just do not know at certain times where we are in this matter of being a Christian. If that has never been your experience, well, do not worry at the moment, and do not think that you must set up some complexes. You go on with God, and you will find that, as it has been with all who have really gone on with God, so it will be with you just like this. Of course, a lot of it may be due to what Christianity has become. That holds very many things to cause us a lot of trouble, distress, perplexity and heartache, but allowing for all that, we can put that in a realm by itself. If we got clear of all that, we should never get clear of this possibility, at least, and this actuality, that it is not all straight sailing to be a Christian, and because of this bewilderment which comes to many sooner or later, the danger is to resolve the whole matter by compromise, saying, 'Oh well, that kind of Christian life is far too complicated, far too involved; there are far too many problems in that direction. I am just going to settle down to my job and be a simple, honest, straightforward Christian, and not bother about any of that at all.' I get on with my job, and the tendency is to detach oneself in order to get out of that turmoil and all that difficulty, and just live a quiet, personal, shut-in, detached life, and be a simple, honest, earnest Christian without any of the complexes. That is the danger which arises in this realm — not to allow oneself to become involved.

But for others who do not follow that course of detachment and isolation, who try to live apart from it all, they find themselves in a battle of seeming, and perhaps actual, contradictions, a battle in the mind, to try and sort it all out, to get it harmonized, adjusted, related, get the solution to it all and bring it all to a nice happy position where you are clear about it all. It is a tremendous battle is this real Christian life. It can become a terrible mental battle in that way, a spiritual struggle because of the problems, the seeming contradictions, a terrible spiritual struggle, so that the Christian life becomes a strain and a burden and sometimes, under duress, the question may be asked, 'Well, is this all right, is this as it should be, is this true Christian life, is this what we are to expect? What about it?'

Fundamental Facts

Now, friends, how is this to be resolved, because I want to say first of all that that is the experience of many, isn't it, the perplexities of this life of faith, this life with God. And then that there is a sense in which it is inevitable, unavoidable, and therefore right. How is this to be resolved? And I want to be as helpful as I can, for I have no interest in mere theories or teachings. Either sooner in the Christian life or at some subsequent point when things get like this, beyond our ability to cope with them, we shall have to come back to fundamental reality as to really what the Christian and the Christian life is.

The Christian Another Man From What He is Naturally

And so, in the first place, we have to get perfectly clear on this, the fundamental fact that the true Christian, the true born from above Christian, is essentially and basically another man from what he is naturally. He is another man. There are two of them together making him up, but essentially and basically, as born from above, he is another man, he is a man of the Spirit, and not a man of his own soul, and in that difference and distinction there arises the whole of this conflict and these complexes. The Holy Spirit, who has come into the born-from-heaven child of God is the Spirit of another world and of an entirely other and different order and mentality, looking at things, judging things altogether differently from what you and I do naturally. It is 'another man'. Of Saul the

king it was said, "*The Spirit of the Lord will come mightily upon thee, and (thou) shall be turned into another man*" (1 Sam. 10:6). Those two things go together. For the time being it was like that. It was very, very brief with Saul, but he became another man when the Spirit of God came on him, and the great tragedy was that the Spirit of the Lord left him subsequently, and an evil spirit came upon him, but that is by the way. The fact is that the Spirit coming in by new birth makes us another man than this man that we are, and that starts all the trouble.

The Experiences of a Man of the Spirit

And that accounts firstly, for the experiences of the spiritual or the Spirit-indwelt man. The experiences of a man of the Spirit as to himself are utterly devastating. As to ourselves, sooner or later we are going to find that we have become involved in the devastation of ourselves. That is strong language. Have you never experienced that, that breaking down, that undoing, that bewildering, all that? Well, there is no other word for it — all that devastation of mind and heart and will in every way, the experience of true Christians. His experiences and what is happening to him are utterly inexplicable. He cannot understand them, and he cannot explain them. He does not know what is happening to him. Yes, sooner or later, like Ezekiel, the man of the Spirit, he will find himself in a river which he cannot pass over or cross. *He cannot.*

Now this introduction of the Spirit into the child of God, into the true Christian, accounts for very much more. It accounts for his own bewildering, devastating experiences. It accounts for the conflicts among Christians. You have a great example of that in the Corinthian church. Take up that first letter to the Corinthians again, and what a scene of conflict between Christians, divisions, strivings, lawsuits, and what not. *Christians!* Sometimes you wonder if this is Christianity at all. But here they are, Christians, all seeming to be against one another, unable to get on with one another, strain and difficulty, and what is the explanation? Take them out of Christianity and put them in the world, and probably they will get on all right, things will be more or less straightforward, just, good business transaction. They may still have their lawsuits, but get that over, and they will shake hands as they walk out of the court, and that is that. Well, it is not nearly so difficult in that realm. But come inside here. What is the explanation? Read the letter again. The apostle makes it perfectly clear that it is this, that if the Holy Spirit has really been introduced into the life, He will set up conflict with what is of the natural life, and if you or I are not prepared to abandon the ground of the natural life, we will be all at sixes and sevens with one another. Let us put that round the other way. If you and I, who naturally might be at loggerheads with one another all the time, will leave our own natural ground and get onto the ground of the Spirit, we will get on all right; troubles will end. It is this conflict between the Spirit as the new heavenly man of another order, and this other man which we are of this order.

This accounts also for the opposition of less spiritual people with those who are more spiritual. We have to face facts, not a pleasant thing to note, but there it is. If you are going on in the Spirit with God fully, there will be many Christians who not only do not understand you, but misunderstand you. They cannot go on with you, and what is more, they think you are all wrong, and you come up against what Paul met everywhere — evil report, and so on, and this conflict between less spiritual (I do not like the way of putting it) and more spiritual is due to this, that the Spirit Himself demands an utter position. And until He gets it, there is strife, there is conflict, and if it is like that between Christians, we have to conclude that there is something amiss as to a life and walk in the Spirit.

All Related to the Man in Heaven

Now let us go on. You see, all this is related to the man in heaven. That is the governing thing in the whole of these prophecies. A man above the firmament, and above the throne the likeness as of a man. A man in heaven. Now we know in this dispensation

what that means. The Man at God's right hand, a Man wholly corresponding to a heavenly order. A man — not angels, but man, a man wholly according to God's mind as to manhood, the only One in the universe of that kind in fulness and utterness, and He is in that place above all, over all, governing and dominating all. And all that you have in these prophecies of Ezekiel is governed by the fact and reality of the Man in heaven. It is a new Man.

I do not think that we have yet sufficiently come to understand the meaning of the incarnation and exaltation of the Son of man. What a different kind and type of being He is from all others. *In every way* different, in His personality, His mentality, His constitution, but He is still Man of another order, a new Man in heaven as God's model, blueprint, standard and representation, governing everything. A new Man in a new place there in heaven, above all, over all, in another place, and Man of another and a new order of being, firstborn among many brethren, first-begotten from among the dead, the beginning of a new order of humanity, of manhood and mankind. Everything is ruled by the place, and the Man in the place in heaven.

Now then, that means that if that Man so different, so other, comes into us by His Spirit, although we are only dimly conscious of it at first and, although we have a very real consciousness of it, we do not understand it — but the fact is that there is set up in us an entirely different mentality. There is another mentality in us from our own. Now our main trouble is in our effort to bring our natural mentality into heaven, and to bring heaven down into our natural mentality. If only we could resolve this whole thing according to our way of seeing things and judging things it would be all right, but we cannot. Heaven is far beyond us, not only in space, in distance, but in nature, in its way of thinking about things.

I wonder if I dare try to help by a very doubtful illustration. I have read all the books that have recently been published on spaceships and 'flying saucers'. In one of them (now I am not verifying this), do not misunderstand me, there is an account testified to by witnesses, of the meeting of a man from the planet Venus who came in one of these flying saucers on to this earth, and was met by a man who tried to enter into conversation with him, but found that impossible. The same language was not spoken, the same mentality was not held. By certain signs and gestures they did arrive at certain conclusions about certain matters, but the description of the man as to his person, appearance, and the impression that he made and his way of looking at things and his tremendous powers, possibilities of all these things, like travelling at many thousands of miles a minute, it is all set down, and when all is said and done a mysterious visitant with a whole world not grasped, not apprehended, not understood. Now that is this faint, and I say, very suspicious illustration. Here you have a Man of another order, of another world. In a sense He does not speak our language. We speak a different language from the Lord. He does not think our thoughts. He thinks altogether differently. His whole mentality is different, and there is a realm in which there is no correspondence between us and Himself. We are this, and He is that, and something has got to happen in us to reconstitute our entire being in order to make us capable of understanding Him and His world of things. We have got to be made all over again.

Now, that is the essence of the Christian life. That is just where we are, and that accounts for all our bewilderment. Oh, if only the Lord would speak our language and do things as we do them and as we want Him to do them, but He does not. He does not bring heaven down into the compass of our kind of make up and outlook and standards and mentalities. Not at all. He is calling us away. By His Spirit He is seeking to reconstitute us according to Himself in heaven, but, oh, it is a devastating process, shattering, breaking, undoing, bewildering, utterly putting us in the place where we cannot grasp what He means in the natural. He is morally and mentally, spiritually, in another world, far away from us. There is another side to all this where He is very near, and where He does speak to us, but while He helps us as little children spiritually, as we

go on we find that we are in something more than a kindergarten. We come right up against tremendous things which are altogether beyond our comprehension, our understanding and our coping.

Now shall we just take one point by way of trying to help illustrate this again. Take the matter of time. I venture to say that in the spiritual life one thing that annoys us is time. As dear Philip Brooks put it — and you have heard me say this before. His wife came in and found him pacing up and down the room one morning, and she said, 'My dear, what is the matter?' 'Oh', he said, 'I am in a hurry and the Lord is not.' That is the trouble, this matter of time. Now there is a sense in which things are a time factor with the Lord. He has His set times. David said, "When I shall take the set time." He has His set times for certain movements in His dispensational purposes. That is quite true, and while it is true also that God is waiting very often for man, we allow of those two things, yet it is equally true that there is no waiting at all with God. You notice in this first chapter how repeatedly it says, "They went", "they went straightforward", "they went straightforward", "they went straightforward". This is a movement of heaven in relation to God's interests here in man, and they went and they went and there is a going, and there is a sense in which God is never waiting. He is always going.

Now we have got to be very careful about our time ideas. If we are not, we shall always be looking for a day which will never come. Oh, we are looking for that day when we will get into our real life-work, that day when all that we have prepared for and expected and hoped for will arrive. Most people have a tomorrow luring them on. That is good and that is bad. We have to be very careful in this matter of our time ideas because that kind of thing, always looking for a certain time point when this and that will happen. Some of you may think you will be able to get free into what you call full-time work for the Lord, when this present phase of things will finish and another phase will arrive, either clearly or not clearly defined in your mind as to what it is going to be. But you are for the time being marking time, waiting, hoping and looking for that tomorrow which may never come. God in this realm is not waiting. God is now working, and unless God's present work in you and in me where we are in that monotonous job, in that home where you are tied by duty and responsibility and have been for so many years. We may long for the day of liberty to be more available to the Lord, in that business which ties us up. We may say, 'If only I could get free, get out of this secular business into the Lord's work' — oh, what a delusion! Some of us would like to be back in your secular business, we do not find that we get out of the difficulty when we get into full-time spiritual work, indeed, it is the other way round. But that by the way. Don't wait, wherever you are. God is not waiting. What is God doing?

God's Supreme Interest

His supreme interest is man-making according to Christ, and if you where you are with all the loathing and longing, the desiring and the hoping, the chafing or the compromise to accept this thing fatalistically, if you are not increasing in the stature of Christ, you are missing the work of God now. And take it from me, young man, young woman, who may think of full-time service for God, God does not call you officially, He calls men and women of spiritual measure. The tragedy of organized Christianity is that it takes up immature men and women who do not know the Lord and have no spiritual measure, and puts them right into responsibilities which smash and break them, very often bringing them to spiritual disaster. Oh no, God is not like that. Look at the Bible. God kept His eye upon a man out there in the field looking after the sheep. His eye is upon another man behind the twelve yoke of oxen. He is watching the man where he is, and seeking there to 'man-make' according to heaven, and when the time came that He needed a man, He had been preparing and watching and making, and He got His man ready. And that is a divine principle. Remember it. Our service for God rests really upon our spiritual manhood, our measure of Christ, our stature. Sooner or later we will be forced to recognize it. God is not waiting in this matter. He is now working, and His work now is to

make manhood after Christ. He is man-making, He is man-changing. If there is no change going on in us where we are now, the work of God has been defeated, arrested, sabotaged, something has gone wrong if we are not changing now where we are. 'Oh, if only I could get out of this and get into the work of God, I should be different, I should be able to grow spiritually.' What a false idea, utterly false. No, no, no. God is putting you where you are for the time being to make a man of you according to Christ, and that is the only thing that matters with Him. Man-making, man-changing, and man increasing after the heavenly order, all in the light of the Man above.

Maybe, I have so much more in my heart, more of this will come out in the next message. Hold on, because I do feel these things are very important. They are fundamental, and I repeat, the explanation and solution of so many of our problems lies here. What does it all mean? Why this bewilderment? Simply because there is another Mind, and I have got to come into that Mind and get out of my own, and sometimes it seems as though I am going out of my mind! Very true. It is all right to go out of your mind if you are going into Christ's mind. I hope you understand and see something of the real meaning of the Christian life, that we are different fundamentally, and that difference has got to be made more and more and evermore real and actual. We are not the same, we are different, we have got to grow in the difference. The Lord help us.

Chapter 4 – Manhood in the Spirit

In pursuance of the message which the Lord, we believe, is seeking to convey to us at this time, I want again to bring your attention to two of the things of which we have earlier spoken in the prophecies of Ezekiel, not by any means exhausting the occasions of their occurrence, but just indicating again by a few.

In the first place, the factor of man in relation to the consummate purpose of God, the basic and inclusive and all-governing word - *"Upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above"* (Ezek. 1:26).

"And he said unto me, Son of man" (2:1).

"And he said unto me, Son of man" (2:3).

"And thou, son of man" (2:6).

"But thou, son of man" (2:8).

"He said unto me, Son of man" (3:1).

"He said unto me, Son of man" (3:3).

"And he said unto me, Son of man" (3:4).

"Moreover he said unto me, Son of man" (3:10),

and so on, as we said earlier, for eighty times through the prophecies that thought and idea of man is in view.

And the other for the moment is the Spirit. Just look at some of the occurrences.

"Whither the spirit was to go" (1:12).

"Whithersoever the spirit was to go" (1:20).

"For the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels" (1:20).

"Then the Spirit lifted me up" (3:12).

"So the Spirit lifted me up" (3:14).

"Then the Spirit entered into me" (3:24).

"The Spirit lifted me up" (8:3).

"For the spirit of the living ones was in them" (10:17).

"The Spirit lifted me up" (11:1).

"The Spirit of the Lord fell upon me" (11:5).

"The Spirit lifted me up, and brought me in the vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea" (11:24).

I just want to place over all that a verse in the New Testament in the book of the Acts 10:38:

"Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him."

Manhood in the Spirit. I think the most superficial knowledge of the Bible is only necessary to realize what an immense place is given throughout that book to the Spirit, the Spirit of God. The first reference, even before divine operations for the creation, recovery from chaos — *"The Spirit of God brooded"* (Gen. 1:2) — and on and ever on right to the end of the Bible, the Spirit is always present.

God's Way is By Spiritual Men

We come to one particular aspect of this whole matter which is perhaps, if not the primary one of the supreme features of the Bible, that God's way is by spiritual men. If I only said that and left you to think about it, you would find a very great deal of most important truth therein contained. God's way is by spiritual men.

What Spirituality is Not

Now inasmuch as many people, not being able to define for themselves the meaning of the word 'spiritual', it may be necessary just to try and help for a moment. There is a great deal of difference between what the world calls spiritual, and what the Bible calls spiritual. We have heard of people going into an art gallery, art critics, and speaking of certain pictures and summing it all up in that word - There is something spiritual about it - by which we suppose they mean that there is something more than just the picture, there is an atmosphere about it, a suggestion that is not just a matter of pigments, colours and scenes, but that it conveys something more. Well, that is an artistic use of the word 'spiritual', but that is not the Bible meaning of 'spiritual'. There are many people who confuse spirituality with mysticism or the mystical, that is, something intangible that you cannot get hold of and lay your hand upon, and they use the word 'mystical', but they really mean mysterious, and there is such a thing as a mystical temperament and a mystical constitution that is abstract, remote and intangible. The whole realm of mysticism, how much it embraces in every direction. But mysticism is not spirituality, not what the Bible means by being spiritual. Medievalism made a great mistake in thinking that if you become ascetic and aesthetic, withdraw from life, shut yourself in a monastery or convent and become an inhabitant of the cloisters, you become spiritual. That is their idea of being spiritual, and an utterly false one, not what the Bible means at all. Other people make an awful confusion between fantasy and spirituality, phantoms, imaginary things, things that belong to the realm of sometimes only imagination, but very real to the people who see and sense these things, and they think that is something spiritual. Not a bit of it. The Bible has no thought whatever, in speaking of what is spiritual, of ghosts and spooks and all that sort of thing. That is not the spirituality of the Bible. Further we must not mix up what is spiritual according to the Bible with the occult. That is what is being done today in a whole world of occultism, sometimes called spiritism — a misnomer entirely, and certainly more so when it is put in the form of spiritualism. No, it is not that, for that is, after all, only psychicism and very often demonism. All that and all those things are something which belong to another realm entirely. They belong to the realm of the natural and soulical man, who is a different man altogether from a spiritual man.

What Spirituality is

What, then, is spirituality? What is a spiritual man according to the Bible? Simply, and yet profoundly, one who has received in a definite act the Holy Spirit of God as indwelling. Altogether apart from himself and his nature, it is Another, the Spirit of God taking up residence. That is the beginning of a spiritual man, a spiritual person. From that point of a definite act and transaction, spirituality is a matter wholly of how much the indwelling Spirit has possession and government of the life. We are more or less spiritual according to the degree in which the indwelling Spirit has His way with us, and His ascendancy over our own natures. That is a spiritual person, and when we say that God's way is spiritual men, we really mean firstly, one indwelt by the Spirit, and then one governed by the Spirit, and if God is going to have His fullest way, then it will only be as the Spirit has His fullest control and government of the life.

Conjunction Between Man's Spirit and God's

Let us come back to the Word, that we should note that the Word of God throughout makes it very clear that for all the fulfilment of divine purpose and for all conformity to the divine mind, there must be this conjunction between man's spirit and the Holy Spirit. There must be a uniting of the Holy Spirit with the object or objects of the divine interest. Now you think for a moment, and see how true that is everywhere through the Bible, in the Old Testament as well as the New. While the two dispensations have their different features regarding the Holy Spirit, nevertheless the law remains the same that, for the fulfilment and realization of any part of the divine purpose and of conformity to the divine mind, the Holy Spirit must be there in union, there must be this conjunction. Perhaps that is too obvious and too simple and well-known and accepted a fact, but we have laid the foundation. And get very clear about this, we cannot get anywhere, it is an absolute essential and completely indispensable for all divine purpose, the knowing and the doing and the realizing of the divine mind and will, that the Holy Spirit comes in and links Himself to the sphere of divine interests. You and I can know nothing of the divine mind without the Holy Spirit. You and I can do nothing of the divine will without the Holy Spirit. You and I cannot change one iota into the likeness of Christ without the Holy Spirit. You and I can fulfil none of the divine work without the Holy Spirit. It covers everything, embraces everything and relates to everything. Knowledge, power and nature all depend upon the Holy Spirit where God is concerned.

Now, that is basic and foundational, and perhaps hardly needs labouring, but let us understand that, because until we do, we are not in the way of anything of the Lord. The Holy Spirit is the custodian of the divine purpose. He is in charge of it. The Holy Spirit alone knows it in fulness and in detail. We do not. The Holy Spirit is the only power for putting any fragment into force and operation. Therefore it is impossible to be in the way of what God means and purposes until we have received the Spirit, and our progress in the purpose and will and way of God will be more or less rapid according to the degree in which we are subject to the Holy Spirit. Spiritual knowledge, spiritual growth, and spiritual usefulness and usability depend entirely upon how far the Holy Spirit dominates our whole life, our whole being.

Now, having laid the foundation, I want to get near to this thing in some detail. Need I say that, as far as I am concerned, I feel very heavily the burden of this word and its importance? I say that only because I want to try to get your cooperation and a sense in you also of the seriousness of this matter.

The Primary Characteristic of the Holy Spirit

What is the primary characteristic of the Holy Spirit? Now, if I were receiving answers from you, I should get quite a number of things mentioned, probably I should get quite a lot of the same thing. Perhaps most of you would come back on the very title. It is the

Holy Spirit, and you would tell me that the supreme or primary characteristic of the Spirit is holiness. Well, that may be true, but for practical purposes that is not what I see to be the primary characteristic of the Holy Spirit. I am going to use a word which may sound strange in this connection. It is the word 'originality'. The primary characteristic of the Holy Spirit is originality. Now we use that word of course in different ways meaning different things. We speak of a person as being original. We say he or she or that child is very original. What we mean really when we use the word of people or things is that there is something unusual, there is something out of the ordinary. It is not in a rut. We make the word 'novel' synonymous with originality. We say it is novel. We come to define that by saying it is original. Now those are not the ideas connected with originality where the Holy Spirit is concerned. Where He is concerned, originality is that which is primal and elementary. It is something altogether apart from anything else that has come into being. It is absolutely original.

Let me try to explain that. The Holy Spirit is much more than any kind of expression, superior to and preceding all expression. Expression always means limitation. It does not matter where you find expression, you will find limitation where the Spirit is concerned. Try to put things into words, try to put things of the Spirit into words, and you know that you are defeated all the time. It is just not possible to express in words the things of the Spirit, neither in their essential nature, nor in their measure. You are left with a sense of defeat and limitation when you have tried to give expression of spiritual things or things of the Spirit.

Take the matter of formation. Immediately anything of the Spirit is given a form, you have entered into the realm of limitation. You just cannot put the Holy Spirit into a set form or give the things of the Spirit a complete form. It cannot be done. Expression in this matter always means limitation. Therefore we have tradition, and we discover that tradition is a limitation, bondage, a prison. Tradition always circumscribes because tradition is an attempt to put things of the Spirit into expression. Now you see, we are getting at the heart of this word 'originality'. That is true that you impose limitation whenever you try to put things of the Spirit into any form of expression. Therefore the Spirit will always make certain demands.

The Spirit Demands a Free Way

First of all, the Spirit of God demands an absolutely free way, a clear way, an open way through all your forms and all your traditions, and through everything that is your kind of expression. He demands a *free* way, an untrammelled way, not only in relation to things that are contrary to the Spirit, but in our ways of expressing things of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit demands the right to transcend and correct every form of expression. Now I am keeping very close to the Bible, of course making demands upon your knowledge of the Scriptures. You notice that immediately the Holy Spirit had come on the day of Pentecost, He came into collision with forms, forms of expression, and the chiefest of the apostles was not exempt. Peter, quoting in effect Leviticus 11 presented the Holy Spirit with Scripture for a position against which the Holy Spirit was standing there and then. A strange position that, isn't it? No, do not misunderstand me. The Holy Spirit never contradicts Scripture, but the Holy Spirit claims the right to interpret the Scripture differently from our expression of it, claims the right to transcend our forms which we have created by the Scripture, and it is a fact that almost everything religious today, even evangelical, is founded upon some Scripture or Scriptures, and for the most part it is all in a terrible conflict. Yes, you will find that Scripture is quoted as the basis and the justification for the existence of numerous things which may not have anything to do with one another, or are in conflict with each other. There is something wrong there; there is a contradiction there. The Holy Spirit will have none of it. He claims the right to transcend, to correct. Evidently Peter had a wrong idea about Leviticus 11, and he had to have that corrected by the Holy Spirit before the Spirit would go on with him and take him up to the house of Cornelius with all that followed. Originality means that the Holy

Spirit must have the right because our expressions of divine things are always limitations.

The Holy Spirit claims the prerogative to set aside or repudiate anything that has been used by Him when it has served its purpose. The trouble with us is that we are so unspiritual as to not be able to discern when a thing which has been used of God has served its purpose, and God wants something other or more, and because we are insensitive in a spiritual way to that, we hold onto something which is no longer under the Holy Spirit's direction and government, and the thing becomes a thing in itself that is either dead or is dying. You see, the Holy Spirit is very much more than our expressions of divine things, and originality means that it must be left with Him to say what He means and what He wants and how He would have things, and when He has no longer any use for certain things, to break in with new light, and to break through our fences and all our limitations, and do something that takes us completely out of our depth. That is originality where the Holy Spirit is concerned, and that is the chief characteristic. The Holy Spirit will have none of our ruts and grooves and set orders and forms. He claims freedom to always do a new thing, and with Him it is always a larger thing than anything before. Men of the Spirit then, are like that. They are not bound by the limitations that have been set up in expressions. They are free in the Spirit to move with God.

Marks of Men of the Spirit

1. Vision

Now I am going to say just seven things about men of the Spirit. Men of the Spirit are therefore, because of what we have just said, always men of vision. Immediately we have put a fence or a hedge around things, immediately we have made this the full and the final and the ultimate, we have lost vision. No person with vision can ever do that, and men of the Spirit are men of vision. There is always something beyond, there is always something more, there is always a deep, inward sense that God has yet something more to show and to do than ever we have seen, and that is not just a theory, an idea, but that is something that dominates the being, and is so dominating as to save from any kind of settling down to something less. You cannot do it if you are a man of the Spirit, you are always in spirit on the move. You are a going concern. That is what we have here in Ezekiel — going, going the Spirit of life was in the wheels, in the living ones, and going, and going, and that follows the statement by the prophet — "*I saw visions of God*". And if I were to change the word 'vision' for another word, it would be this: men of the Spirit are always purposeful men, that is, men dominated by a sense of purpose, divine purpose. We have not reached the end, and we have not come near the end. To the end of our days we always feel that there is infinitely more than we have ever yet known or seen. That is the very nature of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can never be confined to our limitations of life and work and way. No, men of the Spirit are men of vision. I do not mean in the natural sense, they are visionaries in a wrong way. They are men of vision who see that God is still on the move, and that God has a purpose, and they sense something of what that purpose is, and we would never be kept going through all the confusion, conflict, pressure and suffering if we had not vision. Immediately we lose our vision, we go to pieces. Immediately we lose the sense that God has not yet come to a stop, we just disintegrate. It is death to be without vision. I trust that where you are in very unpropitious, unpromising spheres, you will believe this — not thinking of having new schemes and enterprises for the work in which you are, but this inward thing of the Spirit, that God has more than this in view, that this is not all that God is after. That is a characteristic of the Holy Spirit and of men of the Spirit, and they will be like that, having a sense of governing purpose all the time that saves them from dreariness, monotony, disheartenment, frustration, defeat and despair. We do go through bad, dark times again, when it seems the vision has faded, but it comes back, it does not let you go. I say, 'it'; it should be 'He'. The Spirit goes on. That accounts for the innumerable resurrections which are the experience of that which is of the Spirit and

those who are of the Spirit. The Spirit does not give up and stop working.

2. They Never Reach An End

The next thing, of course, is like unto it. Men of the Spirit are men who never reach an end. Now that is tremendously searching and testing. Men of the Spirit never come to a place where they say, 'Well, that is as far as we can go, that is all we can do, we cannot hope for or expect more, there is nothing beyond this. This is the end.' Sometimes they are tempted to say that, and they might even be tempted to say it in words, but they know they are telling lies even when they say it even to themselves. They know that the Spirit within them does not agree. Perhaps you, as I, at different times have come to that place where we have said, 'This is the end, we are finished now', and when we have said it, or even thought it, the Holy Spirit within says, 'Oh no, I have not finished yet, I am not at the end yet', and we have been convicted of foreclosing on the Spirit of God, and we have to rise up and say, 'Oh no, this is not the end. It seems like it, but God has yet more, this is not the end.' Men of the Spirit never reach an end.

Oh, I do hope that you are seeing more than I am saying. I would like to apply this in all sorts of ways. You see, you cannot circumscribe a work of God. If you do, and make this the work of God, this something, this somewhere, and this kind of thing, the work of God, and do not see beyond it, and have no place for anything more in it, you have definitely set yourself across the path of the Holy Spirit. The thing may be good, it may be used by the Holy Spirit, it may have been blessed, but never make it all or final or something apart from the whole work of God. The Lord will disrupt that thing if you do, and bring it to death, The Holy Spirit is abroad in the earth now bringing many things to the point of crisis where, unless the Lord does a new thing and something more, then this thing is going to die, to fade out, and that is simply in keeping with this, that what is of the Spirit never reaches an end and never comes to finality. He is the Eternal Spirit, and all the ages of the ages are gathered into His goings.

3. Conflict with that which is Other Than the Spirit

In the third place, men of the Spirit, men who really are governed by the Holy Spirit, are always in conflict with any substitute or alternative for the Holy Spirit. If there is that which is a substitute for the Holy Spirit and the work of the Holy Spirit, man's work, well-intentioned, with all his devotion poured into it, but it is man's work, it is what man is doing, men of the Spirit are in conflict with that. Any alternative to what is of the Spirit sets up this conflict in those who are governed by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit will have no substitutes, no alternatives, and no partners in this matter. He holds this to Himself and says, in effect, 'Now, everything that is in the divine purpose and will is to come from not from your councils, your committees, your boards, your discussions, your ideas, your efforts. This thing has got to come from Me, right out from Me.' It has got to be of the Spirit, nothing more and nothing less and nothing other than the Spirit. That is what the Bible says throughout, and if we are governed by the Spirit, we shall find that that conflict is set up in us that we cannot be happy unless we are really aware in our own spirits that this thing is of the Spirit of God, the Lord is doing this. There is a very great deal of conflict there. I would like to say much more. But let me repeat, men of the Spirit find themselves always inwardly in conflict with anything that is a substitute or alternative to the Holy Spirit.

4. A Way of Misunderstanding and Loneliness

Therefore in the new place, men of the Spirit — and shall I stop there for a parenthesis? — that which is of the Spirit, not only the individuals, but a work which is of the Spirit, a company in the government of the Holy Spirit, men of the Spirit, things of the Spirit, are always misunderstood and resented by the unspiritual. And Christians can be very unspiritual. There is a lot of difference between being fundamental in doctrine and being spiritual. Those two things do not always go together. Indeed, very often there is a violent conflict between being a fundamentalist and being a spiritual man. You may be absolutely sound and orthodox in your beliefs, doctrines and teachings, and be very unspiritual people. You can be evangelical in outlook and enterprise, and not be spiritual people. Tragedy! And therefore you find that, within the compass of Christian people there is so often the conflict between the carnally minded and the spiritual people, those who are standing for what is absolutely out from God and not out from man on the basis of the life of Jesus Christ, who, Himself anointed with the Holy Spirit, said, "*The Son can do nothing of Himself*" (John 5:19). On that basis Christians will both misunderstand and resent what they sneeringly call 'so spiritual'. Let them sneer, let them express themselves as they will. Here is a fact, that if you are going on wholly with God under the government of the Spirit of God, you will be misunderstood and you will be resented. It is the price of a life in the Spirit.

Therefore men of the Spirit, or that which is of the Spirit, have to tread a lonely path. There is this about such a life, strangely enough, that it is lonely in this way, that everyone who treads this path has to tread it for themselves God so often sees to that. I do not know what your experience is; I know my own. For a considerable number of years, how I have longed, just longed with all my being, to find one man who had gone the way that I am going and knows all about it, and could just tell me all about it, and I could just lean on him. Just someone who knows this way, has been this way, understands it all, this lonely way, this way of the Spirit. I have not found that man yet, and I have had to come to the conclusion that God has deliberately debarred me from finding such a man or such men because of our great propensity for leaning on other people and not getting it firsthand.

5. Everything Firsthand

Now a life in the Spirit and of the Spirit and everything in the Spirit has to be at firsthand. That is originality. It has to be firsthand. Now do not misunderstand, especially young people. That does not mean that you cannot get counsel and advice from others who have walked with the Lord, that you can dispense with such helps as are available. Oh no, that does not justify you in taking an absolutely independent, detached and unrelated position. None of that at all, the whole realm in which we can get help. But ultimately when the Lord is trying to do something in us that is His own specially unique work, He shuts us up to Himself. We have got to find the Lord for ourselves in this matter. It is a lonely way. Look at Ezekiel. What a lonely life his was, alone among the captives, alone, a man in the Spirit. Yes, a lonely path.

6. Truly Positive Men

Men of the Spirit are the only truly positive men, that is, there is something about those men that they know they have got something more than that which has come to them through books and reading and other people. It is not something second-hand with them at all. It is something that they have come into in a life with God alone in the Spirit. They have come to know this by their walk with God in the Spirit, and all that that involves in its terrible costliness, of misunderstanding, misrepresentation, distortion and all that ostracism and aloneness involved in going right on with God. They have come to a knowledge of God which gives them something so assured, and if it were not so, it would be absolutely impossible to stand up against what such people have to meet, if we did

not know that this was true, not something that has been told us, that we have collected and received in a retail form. This has been wrought out on the anvil and in the fires of a personal walk with God. We know! The figures of Scripture are so often insufficiently apprehended. When such a figurative or symbolic phrase occurs as "the girdle of truth", we fail to realize that truth, and you know this truth in your own being, is a tremendously gathering-up, strengthening thing. It girds you. You know. Men and things of the Spirit are the only really positive and certain things. Therefore God takes great pains to drive us, force us back, to the truth. I am feeling more and more the necessity to be absolutely certain that we are right and the thing is right, not to be caught up in great ideas, vistas of truth, and that kind of thing, however interesting, fascinating, captivating it all may be, but to be absolutely sure that it is true. People have got to go through terrible sufferings in relation to that thing. Are we quite sure that we are putting a solid foundation under their feet, that it is true, that thing will prove its truth, that thing will find God standing by it. *"Jesus of Nazareth, whom God anointed with the Holy Spirit and power, who went about doing good, for God was with Him"*. "God was with him" — that is the man of the Spirit.

7. Life

And finally, men of the Spirit, and things of the Spirit, are essential to God, among other things, because of the inveterate addiction to formulate divine things into a fixed system. We suffer from this affliction; the church has always suffered from this affliction. It is a disaster to formulate things into a fixed system — 'as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be' — nothing more to it, to make it fixed. That is how it has been done all through the years or the centuries, that is how we do it, and that means that is how we shall do it to the end. And in all sorts of connections and directions, there is this inveterate addiction to formulating divine things into fixed systems. I am sure you can see that it is so. It has always been so. Immediately God does something, a movement from heaven, man puts his hand upon it and formulates it. Is it a reformation in the recovery of the great fundamental doctrine of justification by faith? — undoubtedly a movement of God into the course of the ages. Very well, men will put their hands upon it and make Protestantism of it, and what a dead, cold thing Protestantism is. Am I to go on? See those movements of God from heaven down through the centuries, real movements of God, there is no doubt about it, movements of the Spirit. But it is not long before the men concerned formulate them, make of them a fixed system of teaching and ways of expression, and they tie it all up, and woe betide you if you do not conform to that fixed order. I say it is an inveterate addiction. God must have men and things of the Spirit for that very reason, because otherwise there is death, division and defeat of what God was really after. It means limitation. Oh, God save us from that! We must continually be on our guard and praying that we shall never become something formulated. We must pray that the one characteristic shall be life, life which you cannot tie up and bind, upon which you can put no harness, the Spirit which goes on, ever on, to greater fulness. It takes us right out of our depths. You say that is dangerous ...

(Recording incomplete by two minutes)