

"SPIRITUAL CONSCIOUSNESS"

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Our subject for this afternoon is Spiritual Consciousness, from the text in Heb. 5:13,14: "For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe; but strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

We would define consciousness as that state or condition of being aware of personal identity, comprising an aggregation of quality inherent in the individual, together with various qualities or impressions received from without through the medium of the five senses. The exercise of these senses is very essential to the development of consciousness. If we desire to become proficient in the vocal art, it is necessary that we should awaken to a consciousness of what is required in the way of proper tone production, according to certain recognized principles and laws of music, so it is necessary we should exercise our hearing in this way under the proper instruction, in order that we might carry on our practice and accomplish the desired result.

If we desire to pursue the art of painting, it is necessary that we should awaken to a consciousness of what constitutes the art, that the sense of sight should be exercised in order to discern the fine distinctions of shade and color, and that the mind should be instructed in regard to what constitutes true art, in order that we might construct a work of art which would be beyond criticism.

We find this same principle of exercise necessary to the manifestation of all the senses. And we find this same principle operating in connection with spiritual things. In the life of the Christian, the Apostle in our text calls attention to the fact that there is an infancy, or childhood stage, when the "milk of the Word" is suitable, and an advanced, mature state, when the deep things of God could be understood and appreciated. We find likewise in the life of the Christian there are five senses which are similar in their operation to the five physical senses. For instance, the Scripture speaks of the hearing of faith, seeing with the eyes of our understanding, coming into touch with God, and it speaks of the Lord Jesus as being touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Likewise, also, we read, "O, taste and see that the Lord is good." And again the Scriptures represent the services of love as emitting a sweet odor.

We understand that Father Adam, being created in the image of God, would have a perfect consciousness toward God; not consciousness of spiritual things, but

consciousness of certain moral principles which would be written in his very nature. We find that Adam did not retain this perfect consciousness toward God and toward righteousness, as the Scriptures say, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." And as a result he became deeper and deeper steeped in sin and degradation, and his moral perception, by which he was enabled to recognize right and wrong principles, became hardened; and the general condition of the human race as regards fellowship and relationship with God, or consciousness of righteous principles, is described in many Scriptures.

In regard to the sense of hearing, we are told that "They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear. They will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely."

In regard to the sense of sight, we have the declaration that the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. In regard to the sense of touch, we read concerning these, "Who, being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." In regard to the sense of taste, the prophet Job declares, "Is there iniquity in my tongue? Cannot my taste discern perverse things?"--implying that there is a taste which has become perverted, and that cannot properly discern things which are good.

In regard to the sense of smell, we have in the words of the Psalmist the condition of the human race stated in this way: "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not; they have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them." We can readily see that the Psalmist is not referring to physical senses, but he is referring to the mental condition which is represented by these, showing the state of the human race, steeped in darkness, sin and degradation.

The Apostle Paul shows very clearly how this condition came about in the first chapter of Romans where he says that when they knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish hearts were darkened. Here we have very clearly expressed the process by which the human race has come into the condition of darkness in which we find it, and in which the Apostle found it at that time. But we find that God did not permit all the race to come fully under the influence of the great adversary; he did not permit all the race to have their senses deadened in this way, but we read of those who were feeling after God, if haply they might

find him--some whose senses had not been entirely perverted, but who were in that condition and attitude of heart where they could respond to the influence of the Lord's instructions. Now a thought that is very necessary for us to see here is, that no matter how much we might desire to feel after God, and to know him, we could not do so, we could not find him, we could not know these righteous principles, unless he was pleased to manifest them to us.

But now in due time, God manifested himself in the darkness and silence that reigned. God showed himself the great God of Love as well as of justice, and in due time he sent forth his Son into the world, heralded by John the Baptist as the voice of one crying in the wilderness. And now those who are capable of being influenced by this sound, those whose senses have not become deadened through the influence of sin, those are the ones who exercise the hearing of faith and come into relationship with God.

Now the Scriptures likewise suggest to us a picture of the whole world not only having their senses deadened by sin, but as they are also asleep, unconscious. There is a difference between being asleep and being blind, or deaf, or having the senses impaired. We find that sleep, for instance, is a state wherein the organs and senses might be perfect and capable of being brought into operation when the condition of wakefulness was brought about, while a person who is blind, or deaf, or paralyzed, cannot feel anything in the sense of touch; even if he were awakened up from a sleeping condition he could not respond to any of those influences of light, of sound, or of contact, or anything of the kind. So we find the scriptures represent the world as having been asleep. When the joyous message of God as represented in the preaching of John the Baptist, "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand," came, it aroused certain ones who were asleep, whose senses had not been deadened by sin, and they responded, as the disciples and others did. Those were the ones who were feeling after God, if haply they might find him.

So those ones then who were faithful to God to the extent he had revealed himself to them, were in a proper condition to receive the Gospel. Now the Scriptures show us likewise these were asleep, and many were dreaming dreams. The prophets and righteous men, all who were of that class feeling after God, had pleasant dreams, dreams of Christ's coming Kingdom, of the glorious time spoken of as the Golden Age when reconciliation to God would be effected, but they had not that consciousness toward God to worship him in spirit and in truth, because God did not give them an intelligent understanding of his plans and purposes.

But now we come to those whose senses are exercised during the present time, those who have been awakened and responded to the glorious message, "Repent, for the kingdom of

God is at hand." These have exercised the hearing of faith and have come into the blessings that God has to give them.

It is proper for us at this time to consider the contrast between those who exercise the hearing of faith and the world in general. The Scriptures speak of those having been enemies of God--"Enemies in your minds by wicked works." Again, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sin. Now we ask, what is the difference? How is it there are some who respond to the influence of the Gospel, and exercise the hearing of faith, who were enemies of God? Would we not reasonably understand that they would require the same treatment God has arranged for the world in general? Would not we require the New Covenant, with the Lord Jesus Christ as Mediator, to bring us into harmony with God? We answer, no, and the secret is found in the words: "And you who were sometimes alienated and enemies in your minds by wicked works." There it is. Those who were feeling after God, being ignorant of God's plans and purposes, and the principles of righteousness, before it was God's due time to manifest these, were enemies in their minds because of lack of proper instruction, because of ignorance concerning the proper standard; but when they were brought into contact with the truth their hearts responded, they heard the words, they appreciated them, they accepted the truths, and they came into a condition of fellowship with God, and peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. But those of the world who have failed to respond to the message of the Gospel, there is a little difference in these. The Apostle explains it where he says, "Ye henceforth walk, not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. Who being past feeling have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

But these, when brought to a knowledge of their condition, their hearts respond, and they exercise the hearing of faith, and come into relationship with God, and are considered as at peace--having a measure of peace--and they are therefore in an attitude for a further manifestation of God's grace and favor toward them. And this brings them now to the exercise of the next sense, the sense of sight. The Psalmist says, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.

It is not everyone who hears the joyful sound of reconciliation with God who walks in the light of God's countenance. Something else is necessary besides this. They need to come to the condition where the eyes of their understanding are enlightened to know the deep things of God; they need to come to a condition of spiritual consciousness, where they can see the heavenly things rather than the earthly things; and so those who have come to God, in the attitude of desiring to know him, who have had a desire in their hearts

which would represent the sense of touch--coming into touch. with God--having had this desire aroused, it brings them to a point where they say, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? How can I serve thee faithfully and acceptably? What is your good will concerning me? To such we have the words of the Lord, through the Psalmist, declaring, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; Forget also thine own people and thy father's house; So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him."

What a grand and glorious experience is it to the individual who awakens to the consciousness of spiritual things, and sees as never before the graciousness of the Lord's character! He begins now to come into closer touch with God, and at this time not only are the eyes of his understanding enlightened so that he begins to walk in the light of the Lord's countenance, but likewise his hope is made complete, which is not complete without the exercise of these two elements, the desire to serve the Lord, and to come into touch with him, and now his expectation of coming into these glorious things promised is awakened, and he rejoices in the hope of the glory of God. We might well understand that expectation, the second element of hope, constitutes spiritual appetite; that in proportion as our expectation increases we will enjoy more fully the good Word of God--as the Scripture says, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." We all know the effect of good, palatable food upon our appetites, and how it makes our mouths water, as we anticipate the enjoyment of partaking. So likewise as our sense of taste comes into exercise, we taste and see that the Lord is good.

Then, again, in this same connection, we have coming into operation that which is represented by the word "love"--the sense of smell. Along this line the Apostle speaks concerning certain services of love which the Church at Philippi rendered unto him. He says, "For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God."

Now having brought the matter to the place of spiritual consciousness, with all of these various senses in operation, our faith, our hope, our sense of hearing, the hearing of faith, and seeing with the eyes of the understanding, and coming into touch with God, precious fellowship with him, having tasted to see that the Lord is good, and having recognized the sweet odor of the incense of the Lord's blessed arrangement, let us exercise these senses more and more; let us remember the exhortations of the Apostle along this line: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." Let us see to it that the various stones constituting the foundation are in a proper place. Let us also remember that if we trust in God, we will

not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication let our requests be made known unto God. This is a sure recipe for the peace of God which passeth all understanding. Again, let us set our affections on things above, that that closeness of fellowship and touch with God might not be interfered with. Let us likewise consider our spiritual taste more and more to see that the Lord is good. Let us also remember to keep ourselves in the love of God, for if we do these things adding to our faith, virtue, and all the various qualities of love which the Scriptures instruct us in, we are assured that we will never fail, but so an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

OUR TEACHER

"What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose."

Psa. 25:12

Let Him teach thee, weary soul;
Let His hands now make thee whole;
Let His peace thy heart control,-
Let Him teach thee.

Isa. 1:14.
Job. 5:18.
Col. 3:15.

Into paths of righteousness
Let Him lead and let Him bless;
Let Him save thee from distress,-
Let Him teach thee.

Psa. 23:3.
P55. 67:7.
Psa. 107:18.

Let Him guide thee with His eye;
Let His hand thy need supply;
Let His goodness satisfy--
Let Him teach thee.

Psa. 32:18.
Phil. 14:19.
Psalm 65:14.

Let His good word sanctify:
Let the furnace purify;
Let Him say "Fear not; 'tis I"
Let Him teach thee.

John 17:17.
1 Pet. 1:7.
Mark 6:50.

Let Him probe thy heart within;
Let Him search out every sin;
Let the glorious light shine in,-
Let Him teach thee.

Psalm 66:10
Psalm 139:23.
2 Cor. 14:6.

Let the Shepherd kindly feed;
Let Him gently, gently lead;
(He'll not break the bruised reed)
Let Him teach thee.

Isa. 40:11

Isa. 42:3

Let Him give thee songs at night
Let Him make the darkness light;
Let Him set thy spirit right,--
Let Him teach thee.

Job 35:10.
Isa. 142:16.
Psalm 51:10.

In the tumult let Him hide,
Let Him keep thee at His side
Let His name be glorified,-
Let Him teach thee.

Psalm 37:5; Psalm 31:20
Exodus 33:21.
Isa. 61:3.

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