

A NEW HEART AND A NEW SPIRIT

By Susan A. Duncan

(Excerpted from Chronicles of a Faith Life, Chapter VIII.)

...Some years ago I had surrendered my will, and I had said an eternal yes to God, and now, in my will, I was saying yes, and had no thought of asking God to change His plan; but my spirit was not one with Him, my will said yes, but my spirit chafed, and if I had put the matter in words, it would read thus, "Not my will but Thine be done, nevertheless I think it a most unreasonable request." My will consented that God should have His way, but I questioned His wisdom, and my spirit chafed and was cross.

Here is where many dear ones fail; they are perfectly sure God is speaking, and they do not actually intend to disobey; like the Israelites they say, "We will do," but they do it with a "kick" in their spirit, which destroys peace and hinders blessing. God made me to see how one could even be willing to go to the stake, and yet to do so with a wholly unbroken spirit, utterly at variance with Him who said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God;" and whether was success or bitterest persecution, it was all the same, "I delight to do Thy will," no chafing, no resistance, no questioning, but absolute brokenness of spirit. Had it been otherwise His mission on earth would have been a failure. Can you imagine Jesus during all His life obeying His Father with His spirit chafing, and crying out at every step to be eased or released from the trial, the burden lifted or the circumstances changed? It is not alone His utter surrender of will that excites our admiration, but it is the consciousness that His whole being went with the will in glad obedience, and thus we learn the meaning of the Lamb slain. And we, His bride, are to be united to this Lamb. How can we unless we too have been slain?

Much has been spoken and written on the subject of death to the self-life, and much honest effort has been put forth on the part of those seeking an overcoming life, but alas, all our efforts have not left us dead but more like the prophets of Baal on Carmel, only hewed and hacked until body, soul and spirit are bruised and sore and aching. What then, is the way out, for if honest desire and effort will not bring victory, where are we? I saw that something is radically wrong with us, that the root I had been seeking is in a wrong spirit. It is just as necessary that we have a right spirit as a clean heart; a heart that is cleansed from sin, and a broken spirit, the "kick" taken out. How are we to obtain in? We are told in Ezekiel 36:26: "And I will put My Spirit within you." My heart simply leaped with joy as I saw God had provided a way out. "A new spirit will I put," no efforts of mine, but a work of God, a creation, as it were, of a new human spirit, a displacing of the old, unbroken spirit by a new one that will yield, that will be obedient, that will not chafe, but will be utterly and forever one with God. Oh, what a relief! nothing to do but to feel our need, bring it to Him, and make the exchange. What will happen then? He tells us in Ezekiel 36:27: "And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you (not help you) to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them." Blessed truth! of course, "ye shall," because it is God, not you, working.

People everywhere are praying for Pentecostal power; I saw the reason it is not given. God will never baptize the flesh with His Spirit. Of the sacred oil, it is said, "Upon man's flesh it shall not be poured." He does not baptize our intellect, but the Holy Spirit comes upon our spirit, and He gives wisdom through the heart, instead of the head. David saw after his one great sin that what he needed was a broken spirit, Psa. 51:17. This is why God often takes up one of no culture, and little intellectual power, and like the case of the African Kru boy, so baptize them with the Holy Ghost that they become a wonder unto many. If it were not so, man would use God, instead of God using man.

He does graciously put His Spirit upon man at times, and there is really Pentecostal power, but man cannot be trusted with power, so that this intermittent life is the best God can do for an unbroken spirit. But when once the will is surrendered and the new spirit received, it is upon this spirit that God says, "I will put My Spirit," and a life of power and victory is assured. Weary heart, as you read these lines, give to Him the old, hard, unbroken spirit, and let Him put within you the new, and life will be a joy. Whether you are called to "scrub or preach," it will be all the same; for, like you Lord, you will say, "I delight to do Thy will."

One dear Christian man, on hearing this truth, said, "I have long known that something was wrong somewhere, but I did not know what to call it, and I am glad that it is now labeled, for I shall know better how to deal with it." God has made me see that the character and work of many an honest Christian bears the label "unbroken" and that is the reason that He permits many trials that are beyond our understanding, beyond our faith, even beyond our endurance, not only that the will may surrender, but that we may be pressed to exchange our human spirit, which is forever warring with God, for the new spirit promised us, which is broken, teachable, humble, and like our Lord. "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do for them." Ezekiel 26:37.

"My wild will was captured, yet under the yoke,
There was pain not peace at the press of the load;
Till the glorious burden the last fiber broke,
And melted like wax in the furnace of God.

And now I have flung myself recklessly out,
Like a chip on the stream of His infinite will;
I pass the rough rocks with a smile and a shout,
And just let My God His dear purpose fulfill."