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The Oil for the Lampstand

by T. Austin-Sparks

Edited and supplied by the Golden Candlestick Trust.

Reading: Exodus 25:31-40; 27:20.

We come now to speak of the oil for the lampstand, or the candlestick; the oil which is to provide the testimony which is to be found in the Lord's House and in relation to priestly ministry. We know quite well that the oil of the Old Testament is the type of the Spirit in the New Testament. So, that being the case, we have here the Spirit in sevenfold expression. There are seven lamps in this one lamp. It is one vessel and it is one Spirit. If we were to use Paul's language we should say, "There is one Body and one Spirit...". Here is one vessel of testimony and one Spirit in the vessel, yet expressed in a sevenfold way. This sevenfoldness is divided into three; that is, it is divided into one, and two threes: the central stem and three branches on each side.

Now without staying longer, let us get right to the New Testament:

Rev. 1:4-5: "the seven spirits which are before His throne".

Rev. 3:1: "the seven spirits of God".

Rev. 4:5: "seven lamps of fire... the seven spirits of God".

Rev. 5:6: "seven horns, and seven eyes... the seven spirits of God".

The lampstand is before the Lord, a sevenfold expression of the Spirit divided into one, and two threes.

The Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus

The "one" is the central, shall we say, the inclusive and basic feature of Romans 8:2: "the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus". Everything else springs out of that. The Holy Spirit, before anything else in the active way of testimony when it is a matter of expression in testimony and in ministry, makes the sanctuary of God a functioning thing; not just a beautiful picture, model or idea. It is the Spirit of Life.

In Ezekiel, of course, you have that very strongly set forth in chapter 1, verse 13: "As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches; it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning."

This presentation of God's activities is a picture of vivid activity, energy; it is one word - life. It is life as the origin of everything in relation to God's purpose. As Nicodemus was told, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." That is where Life begins, by the Spirit of Life, born of the Spirit.

Then in John 6 you remember the Lord uses again the word in connection with the Spirit, "the Spirit gives Life", "it is the Spirit that quickens" (AV).

There is the centre, the spring of everything in testimony, and before there can be any other kind of expression, there must be the manifestation of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Life; then everything else lives.

Now we turn to the two sets of three. You really want to have this presentation of the lampstand in your mind's eye, and with that central branch and that central lamp at the top, just write over it, "The Spirit of Life". Then you have the three branches on either side.

The Spirit of Holiness

Down on the one side, over the uppermost lamp you will write Romans 1:4: "the Spirit of Holiness". "Declared to be the Son of God according to the Spirit of Holiness by the resurrection of the dead". The context, I feel, rules out the idea that that refers to the raising of others. It relates to His own resurrection. According to the Spirit of Holiness, raised from the dead, declared to be the Son of God with power.

Here is the resurrection of the almond blossom, a lamp connected with the Spirit of Holiness, because to obtain that new creation, that new heavenly kingdom, that eternal purpose of God, there can be no resurrection that is apart from holiness. There will be a general resurrection of the dead for judgement, but the resurrection unto Life and not unto death is resurrection according to holiness. It is the only thing that can be raised: that which is holy in Christ. Therefore the Holy Spirit as the first expression of Life in Christ, deathless life, resurrection life, is the Spirit of Holiness. This is a holy Life, an incorruptible Life, and to have Life in Christ and the Spirit of Life in Christ means, in the first practical outworking and expression, holiness of life.

It is a misapprehension, and a terrible failure somewhere, if people claim to have the Holy Spirit and are not living in holiness. There is something wrong there. The *Holy* Spirit is the Spirit of *Holiness*, and it should be taken for granted that to have the Spirit actively in us is to have holiness actively in us, and unholiness is a contradiction to our very having the Spirit, and a contradiction and a denial of the Spirit's activity in us.

There ought not to be a subsequent experience in the history of a believer when they come to what is called sanctification. That ought to be from the beginning. Unfortunately it is not because of bad teaching or lack of teaching. The fact is that from the beginning believers ought to be indwelt and filled with the Spirit, resulting in holiness. That is the expression of Divine Life and the Spirit of Life operates to push off from us the fruits of unholiness and to produce in us the fruits of holiness.

It ought never to be necessary to say to a young believer, "You must give up this and you must give up that; you must stop going here and you must stop going there". We ought never to approach anyone on that ground. Many will say, "If I become a Christian must I give up this? And must I give up that?" And it is a mistaken thing to say, "Of course you must!" Never should we say a thing like that, and never ought it to be necessary to say it to a young believer. Our attitude should be: You let the Lord come into your heart and suspend all those questions. You let the Lord have His place and all your problems along that line will solve themselves. For some of us I have no doubt we have discovered that when the Lord has really become Lord in us, those things that we at one time thought we should have to give up and painfully lose, have simply dropped off. We have lost interest in them; they no longer have any hold on us. In fact, we hardly realise that they have gone, we can hardly say when they went, but we find now they are no longer there and they do not trouble us any more. They were very dear and precious at one time, but strangely enough we count them as nothing. The Spirit of Life has forced off the fruit of an old creation and is now producing His own fruit unto holiness. So it becomes the living Christ who supplants by the power of His own risen Life the old life of death.

The Spirit of Truth

The second branch down on that side will have written over it John 16:13: "...the Spirit of Truth". Alongside of that we might well place Ephesians 1:17-18: "...a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him". That is the meaning of the truth. Life works out in revelation of Jesus Christ and truth is not academic or technical truth. Truth is personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus in a living, experimental way. Knowing is not just technical, mental, intellectual knowledge in the Word of God; it is association with a person. To know the truth is to come into association with the truth in a living way and that truth is not something in itself. It is in Jesus, "as the truth is in Jesus". Now, Life works out in that way when it has its free course, when the snuffers do their work and the dishes collect up that which obstructs, which only befores, beclouds and besoots the Light. And the Lord has His golden snuffers in His sanctuary. He has His way of getting rid of the unpleasant, odious things in us. He does it in love; it is all gold.

There may be things which becloud the clear shining and arrest the pure light, that wick of our own nature which sometimes smoulders or makes a smoke. The Lord has His very effective and yet loving ways of getting rid of that. But when this sort of thing is done and the flame is made clear, then there is light, there is growing knowledge of the Lord, there is revelation of Him. It is when this smouldering wick of our own reasoning, our own argumentativeness, preferences and desires is there, that the light is not as clear; that is, the revelation of the Lord is not proceeding unhindered.

There are mists and smokes about and we are not seeing light in His Light. We are fumbling, and the atmosphere becomes a little thick. But when that self, that natural life of ours is kept trimmed, then we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and it is living.

The Spirit of the Fear of the Lord

The third lamp down on that side will have over it Isaiah 11:2: "The Spirit of the fear of the Lord". If we ask what the fear of the Lord is, we shall have the answer best in Him concerning whom those words were written in the first instance. And we shall see that the fear of the Lord in Him meant that in perceiving the will of the Father, He never argued about it or debated it, but instantly did it. The fear of the Lord is immediate and instant response to the known will of God. It is fear to disobey, fear to be out of line with the Father's will. It is fear to grieve Him. In another place it says, "He shall be of quick scent in the fear of the Lord." A heart that is wholly set upon the Lord is quick to discern the Lord's will and quick to obey it. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of the fear of the Lord. The Holy Spirit is very quick in His registration of what is and what is not the mind of the Lord and calls for an immediate response as that is made known. In us the fear of the Lord is not long-drawn-out contentions and arguments with the Lord, not delays, but perceiving the will of the Lord. Having reason to believe that the Lord has spoken, at all costs, we respond. That is the Lord Jesus, upon whom the Spirit rested without measure.

Now we turn to the other side of the lampstand, to the other three branches.

The Spirit of Love

On the uppermost branch, corresponding to holiness on the opposite side, we have 2 Timothy 1:7: "the Spirit of love". Some people have got an idea of holiness which is really a cold righteousness without any love. They call it holiness, but really it is legality; and it is a loveless thing: hard, cruel and icy. Holiness is not like that. Holiness is balanced by love. Love is holy. Holiness is love. "The love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit..." (Rom. 5:5).

The Spirit of Grace and Supplication

The second lamp on this side may have Zechariah 12:10 over it; "the spirit of grace and supplication", balancing truth, knowledge, and revelation. When we come into a living knowledge of the Lord, a living revelation of the Lord, in the first place it does not produce pride, arrogance and self-importance. There is all the difference between possessing a lot of truth doctrinally and technically and having revelation. Revelation produces humility. It must do that because it is so vast that the one who has it knows quite well that the thing is altogether beyond them. It is not the cleverness of their brain; it is not what they have thought out and produced by any quality of their own intellect. This is something altogether of the Spirit of God and therefore a graciousness is found, a spirit of grace. There is no virtue in our having revelation. It is all of grace and therefore it produces in us graciousness. And a further significance is supplication. Here is the man who had great revelation and for other believers he bows his knees unto the Father, "I bow my knees unto the Father"; "I make supplication for you"; "I pray for you, that He would grant unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation". The Spirit of Life works out in grace and supplication.

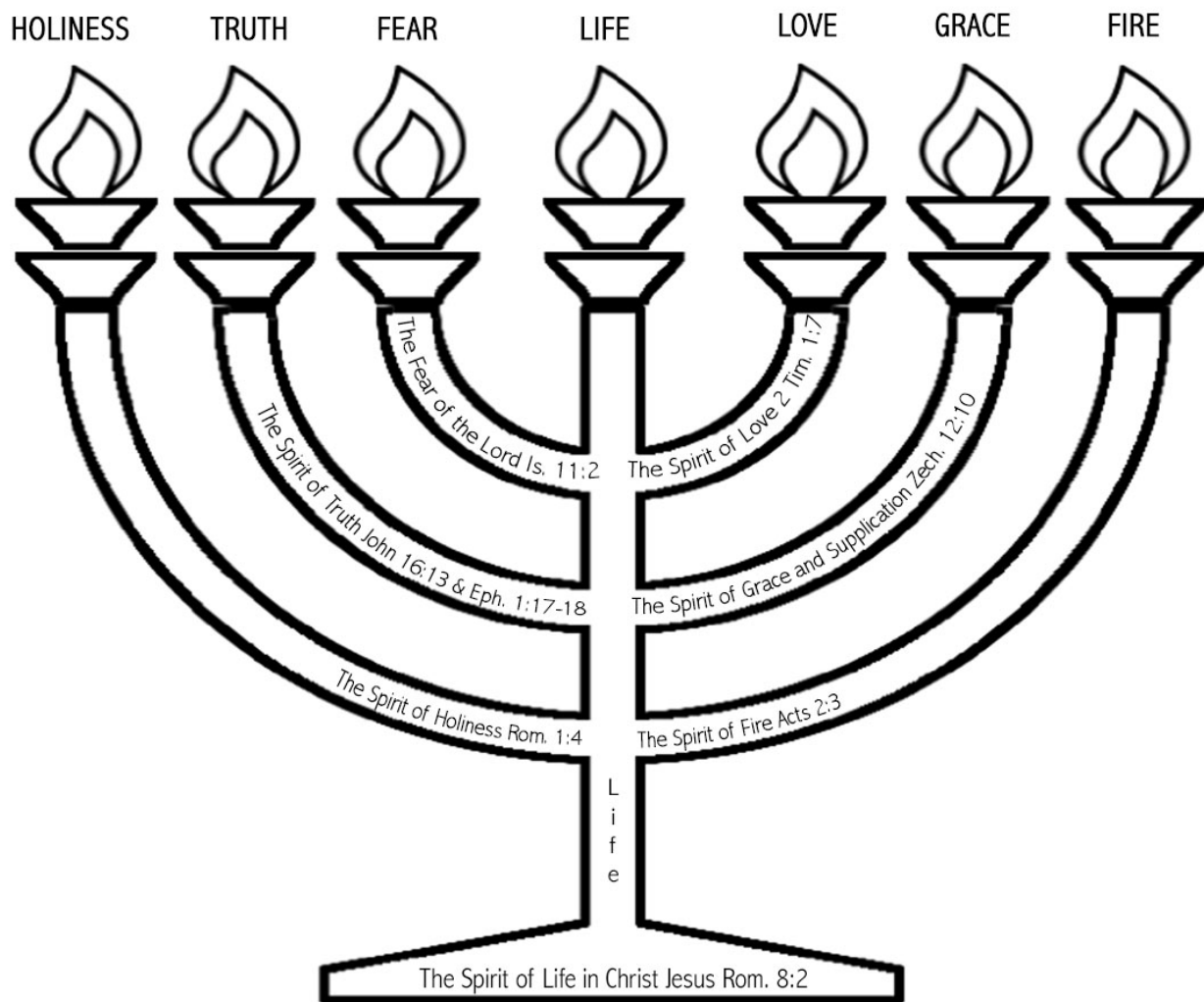
The Spirit of Fire

Finally, the third on that side of the lampstand, Acts 2:3: the Spirit of fire. "He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Matt. 3:11 and Luke 3:16). This reminds us of Ezekiel chapter one. Fire has many purposes, many uses, many effects, but there in Acts 2 surely fire is the Spirit of power. It is the Spirit of holiness; fire is purging. It is the Spirit of Life; fire is living. But particularly the Lord's word concerning Pentecost was, "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come...". The fire was the symbol of a new power from heaven, as it proved that day. Now love in Christ by the Spirit is power. This requires much dwelling upon.

There you have the sevenfold light expression of the Spirit; life as central and basic, and holiness, truth, the fear of the Lord, love, grace and fire.

The Sevenfold Light Expression of the Holy Spirit

Rev. 1:4-5, Rev. 3:1, Rev. 4:5, Rev. 5:6.



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But then when you turn to the book of the Revelation, that last passage to which we referred at the beginning of our meditation concerning the Lamb, it says, "He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God." Horns are symbols of power, and eyes are symbols of perception, together with the Lamb as the seven spirits of God.

I think we are not wrong in saying that that means the sevenfold expression of the one Spirit, the sevenfold outworking of one source, the Spirit of God. If you put all those passages together and see them as being the sevenfold expression of the Holy Spirit, you will also see that each of these seven comes under the heading of horns and eyes, power and perception. In other words, holiness itself is a horn, it is a power: then the power of Christ, the power of the Lamb. Truth as the truth, not just revelation, coming through in any way, has the whole power of the enemy set against it, because of the power of revelation. Once you get a thing by revelation you are out, you are emancipated, you are through, something is done; that is tremendous. You may have all the doctrine, and it make no difference, and the devil does not mind how much doctrine you have. I think he likes to bury us under mountains of doctrine sometimes, but get revelation and that is a thing that affects him. It is a tremendous power. It is a horn. It is the power of the Lamb. The fear of the Lord! A quick scent and instant obedience is power.

Love! Surely this can be brought in relation to the horn; what power there is in Divine love! Grace and supplication! Fire! Yes, all are expressions of the power of the Holy Spirit, the power of Christ, all in a living way, all through Life, the Spirit of Life.

And the same is true of the eyes, spiritual perception. Holiness in the life works out in keen spiritual perception. "The pure in heart shall see God" and the pure in heart see everything else. To walk near to the Lord in any measure of holiness is a painful thing because of the resultant perception. It brings with it difficulties and problems, as you see and as you feel. Then the whole question sometimes of fellowship arises, but holiness is a keenly perceptive power in the life. And the same is true of revelation; oh, what difficulties revelation raises when you have seen! It is a power.

Judaism was a mighty power in the life and history of Saul of Tarsus. He saw the Lord, he had a revelation, and that did what nothing else in this universe could have done. It would have been utterly futile and fraught with some very serious consequences for the one who had attempted it, to try and argue Saul out of Judaism, to tell him that Judaism was no longer of any account before God. You have this firebrand Saul of Tarsus to deal with. Nothing would touch him along that line. A revelation of Jesus Christ did it and broke the whole power of that in him and emancipated him. Revelation is a great power, truth is a great power, and the power is bound up with the perception. The fear of the Lord brings an intensifying keenness of scent in the things of the Lord. Love! Who will say that love is blind? There is nothing more keen-eyed than love, nothing that sees more than love. Love may be willing to cover, love may be willing to shield, but it is not true to say that love is blind. Love sees a great deal more. Grace, supplication and fire! These are all factors in spiritual perception.

So Life works out through power and spiritual perception and it works through these six things of which we have spoken. They are the spiritual channels of this Life, this risen Life in the Lord, and they produce in the believer the power of that Life and the perception of that Life.