

Topic: Un-Spiritual Christians.

Text: Romans 8:11 -- "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you."

Purpose: To point out that perhaps it is more Christian to be very active in good will and good works for other people than to spend a great deal of time in aloof contemplation and cultivation of spiritual truths and spiritual riches for oneself; that the motives for such good will and good works must be a real concern for others. This concern is based on a love of God rather than on trying to qualify for eternal life.

Date written: May 13, 1960

Dates and places preached:

May 15, 1960, Sheridan, Wyo (9-30 + 11:00 a.m.)

May 5, 1963 - Montrose, Colo., 11 am.

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH  
SUNDAY SCHOOL  
ATTENDANCE RECORD  
\*\*\*\*\*

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER \_\_\_\_\_  
Present Absent

NUMBER OF PUPILS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT OF COLLECTION \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF VISITORS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

NAMES OF NEW MEMBERS

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



---

Introduction:

1. A growing practice in religious circles today is that of having "spiritual life retreats." Such events are usually held at camps in beautiful natural settings, at colleges or other institutions with dormitory-style housing and group-feeding facilities, or in churches. They may be affairs of just a few hours, a weekend, or of a week or longer. They are usually led by people who are considered leaders in spiritual life. The idea is that some are more competent than others in the techniques by which ones spirit approaches God, and that such unusually spiritual persons can help others to know God more keenly too. People who attend such retreats usually come back from them with an obvious glow, full of happiness and enthusiasm.

2. One day a friend and I met a couple of ladies who are inveterate retreat tenders at a retreat sight operated by The Methodist Church. These ladies had hardly met us before they started reproaching us for not participating in the retreats. We had attended one of them, but they seemed hardly to hear us tell

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH  
SUNDAY SCHOOL  
ATTENDANCE RECORD

\*\*\*\*\*

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER \_\_\_\_\_

Present

Absent

NUMBER OF PUPILS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT OF COLLECTION \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF VISITORS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

NAMES OF NEW MEMBERS

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



them that, maybe because they weren't at that one. They kept talking about the spiritual blessings to be had at the retreat center, about how one could live close to God there, about our need for spiritual life. We felt a flush of resentment creeping over us because of the rude persistence of these apostles of spirituality. Rather than argue with the good ladies one of us asked one of them about an acquaintance and friend whom they both knew. The spiritual sister said something about the friend having gotten over some sort of sickness, and then added, "But she's not a christian, because she has not been regenerated yet." ~~That was what she had~~ She followed this with a somewhat-detailed account of the shortcomings of the mutual friend. The one who had asked the question knew well the person about whom they were talking, as a kind, honest, tolerant and helpful person who in an unpretentious manner seemed to have a very genuine faith.

3. How could two persons so "spiritual" as the two lady retreaters be so judging and harsh toward others? On the basis of an outward showing of spirituality, people

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH  
SUNDAY SCHOOL  
ATTENDANCE RECORD

\*\*\*\*\*

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER \_\_\_\_\_

Present

Absent

NUMBER OF PUPILS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT OF COLLECTION \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF VISITORS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

NAMES OF NEW MEMBERS

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



frequently use pious wording about God and the spirit are often put into spots of leadership and prominence in spiritual organizations, like the church. Because their words and actions toward other people don't show the love, forgiveness and tolerance which are expected from those close to God, other people sometimes term some of these folks hypocrits. You probably have heard honest and fair people outside the church say of some within it, "if he demonstrates what ~~it~~ means to be spiritual, I don't want to be that way."

4. We might even decide that as the word "spiritual" is most frequently used, we as christians had better strive to be un-spiritual. But to be fair in arriving at any conclusion on such a subject, we need the knowledge to be gained by turning to the definition and a brief history of the term "spiritual."

### I. Definition and history of the word "spiritual."

1. My Collegiate dictionary defines "spiritual" thusly:

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH  
SUNDAY SCHOOL  
ATTENDANCE RECORD

\*\*\*\*\*

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER \_\_\_\_\_  
Present                      Absent

NUMBER OF PUPILS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT OF COLLECTION \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF VISITORS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

NAMES OF NEW MEMBERS

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



(1) Of or consisting of spirit; incorporeal.

(2) Of the intellectual and higher endowments of the mind; intellectual.

(3) Of the moral feelings or states of the soul.

(4) Of the soul or its affections as influenced by the divine Spirit; pure; holy; --opposed to carnal.

(5) Of sacred things or the church; sacred; ecclesiastical.

2. All of these definitions define "spiritual" as describing something different from the physical body. How did it come about that the body and the spirit are considered as so very different as to be almost separate? Let us be guided by Vergilius Ferm's "Encyclopedia of Religion" as we survey briefly the history of the idea of the spirit.

a. As far back as we can study man it seems that people everywhere have believed that the world was full of active, intelligent and invisible beings, some of whom may strongly affect the course of human life for good or bad. Generally, people have always considered the spirit population of

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH  
SUNDAY SCHOOL  
ATTENDANCE RECORD

\*\*\*\*\*

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER \_\_\_\_\_  
Present                      Absent

NUMBER OF PUPILS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT OF COLLECTION \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF VISITORS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

NAMES OF NEW MEMBERS  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



-----  
the world to be more numerous than the human population. Spirits are sometimes classified according to their dwelling place in sky, air, earth, underworld, water, forests, or mountains.

b. In most religions, including those of Egypt, Babylonia, Iran, Greece, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, believers thought that hosts of spirits were working with or against man. Their activity was seen in all startling or super-usual happenings. The good spirits could fulfill human desires, bring luck, cause fertility, and protect from danger. Good spirits were treated as lesser gods.

c. Sometimes a spirit could be persuaded to live in a material object, so that if one kept this object on his person the spirit was his constant companion. Such objects ~~were~~ are called fetishes, and might be rings, bracelets, necklaces, pins, etc., which one wore as protection against harm.

d. The evil spirits, sometimes called demons, were blamed for the dangerous and destructive moods of

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH  
SUNDAY SCHOOL  
ATTENDANCE RECORD

\*\*\*\*\*

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER \_\_\_\_\_  
Present Absent

NUMBER OF PUPILS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT OF COLLECTION \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF VISITORS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

NAMES OF NEW MEMBERS

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



-----  
nature, for sickness, epidemics, death, insanity, and nightmares. Demons had to be held in check by powerful charms.

e. Sometimes it is hard in people's thinking to distinguish between the activity of spirits and those of ghosts which may linger about old homes. Some folks believe that the souls of ancestors care for the welfare of their descendents, like good spirits. Souls of the unhappy dead, such as those of women who died in childbirth, unmarried persons, the unburied, murdered or forgotten dead, act with all the malignant wickedness of demons.

f. The idea which gave rise to all these thoughts, beliefs and superstitions about spirits was the thought that the human soul is a separate thing from the body. When you sleep your soul leaves your body and ventures out alone into the unknown for new experiences, so many primitive people believe. This idea that each person possessed a soul and body which are entirely separate led to a dualism which lasts to this day in our thinking about the nature of man. There is spiritual

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH  
SUNDAY SCHOOL  
ATTENDANCE RECORD

\*\*\*\*\*

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER \_\_\_\_\_

Present

Absent

NUMBER OF PUPILS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT OF COLLECTION \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF VISITORS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

NAMES OF NEW MEMBERS

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



and material, soul and body, this world and the other-world. ~~Materially, this world and~~ spiritual, soul, other-world are considered nobler, higher and longer-lasting than material, bodily and worldly things. The highest of all things, God himself, is a spirit, according to most of the higher religions including many forms of Christianity.

3. This concept of many, and of reality, as being twofold, has had some good and some bad results. Man's experience with the spirits or with the one supreme Spirit of God are termed "spiritual."

a. Often people have called experiences spiritual which have been associated with abnormal actions such as "speaking with tongues," and "holy-rolling." The spiritual life has therefore come to be identified with fanaticism and emotional excesses, without either reason or moral control. Thus religious individuals and groups which emphasize the word "spiritual" very strongly have fallen into disrepute in the eyes of many people.

b. Spiritual pride is perhaps the

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH  
SUNDAY SCHOOL  
ATTENDANCE RECORD

\*\*\*\*\*

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER \_\_\_\_\_  
Present                      Absent

NUMBER OF PUPILS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT OF COLLECTION \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF VISITORS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

NAMES OF NEW MEMBERS  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



-----

most objectionable of all attitudes held in religion. People who talk overmuch in terms like "the Lord," "my Jesus," "are you saved?," who have a Bible quotation to throw out piously for every situation, somehow so often seem to be snobbish. Their attitude often seems to imply, "if you do as I can show you, if you have a spiritual experience exactly like mine, you'll be saved. If you don't, if you refuse to follow my views and pattern, then I have no time for you and your kind." Probably not many people actually think this way, but the people whom the snob, to whom they are rude, certainly get an impression of that which led to the phrase, "holier than thou." Most folks react to such a pose in a way which in effect repeats, "if that's to be spiritual, I'll be unspiritual."

c. Others who emphasize the concept of spiritual life may not speak in tongues or holy roll or be unduly proud outwardly, but their failures to relate their claimed closeness to God more closely to their daily living often produces a distrust and dislike of religious and spiritual terminology

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH  
SUNDAY SCHOOL  
ATTENDANCE RECORD

\*\*\*\*\*

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER \_\_\_\_\_

Present                  Absent

NUMBER OF PUPILS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT OF COLLECTION \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF VISITORS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

NAMES OF NEW MEMBERS

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



on the part of many. We often react to some spiritual folks as two of us did to the lady retreat-goers we mentioned here earlier. We ~~try~~ to say that if some who pose as spiritual leaders are christians than we rather be unspiritual christians.

4. To understand what we mean by the phrase "unspiritual christians" we turn to a few of the teachings and sayings of Jesus. Where better can we turn than to the Bible to become aware of what a christian should be?

## II. Jesus' standards for a christian.

1. As we read in the gospels of the ministry of Jesus we are impressed with the great amount of time he spent teaching, helping, and healing people. Accounts of Jesus indicate that an awfully small part of his time was spent in spiritual retreat for communion with God for his own benefit. At the beginning of his ministry with the help of God he overcame the temptations with which he was faced as he meditated in the desert. Immediately he returned to Galilee, and went into the synagogue, and began to

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH  
SUNDAY SCHOOL  
ATTENDANCE RECORD

\*\*\*\*\*

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER \_\_\_\_\_  
Present                  Absent

NUMBER OF PUPILS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT OF COLLECTION \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF VISITORS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

NAMES OF NEW MEMBERS

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



teach. The Sermon on the Mount came about because a crowd followed him to a place where he wanted to spend some time in private meditation. He could not refuse to teach and help them. Without exception, whenever he prayed, whenever he sought spiritual strength, he immediately turned to the practical tasks of helping people. For the most part, Jesus was a very busy person, who spent most of his time in the unspiritual activities of serving others.

2. Jesus mingled with and helped unspiritual people too. Once he was eating in the home of a tax collector, who was a puppet of the hated Roman government. Pharisees, the spiritual leaders of his religion and race, came to him and asked "Why do you eat and drink with sinners?" Jesus' answer is classic: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have not come to call the righteous, but ~~those who are~~ sinners to repentance." (Lk. 5:27-32). Another time the same people rebuked him for not fasting and offering prayers more often. In the terminology of that day he was being told that he was not spirit-

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH  
SUNDAY SCHOOL  
ATTENDANCE RECORD  
\*\*\*\*\*

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER \_\_\_\_\_  
Present Absent

NUMBER OF PUPILS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT OF COLLECTION \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF VISITORS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

NAMES OF NEW MEMBERS

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



-----  
mal enough. Jesus defended his unspiritual activities with parables about rejoicing with a bridegroom while he is present, not patching an old garment with new cloth, and putting new wine into new wineskins. All of these added up to a teaching that one must practice ones beliefs in every-day life; that he who would help others must work with the tools available and not create a false, other-worldly atmosphere. (Lk 5:37-39).

3. If we think of the danger of spiritual pride, we ought to remember how Jesus drove home a truth to his disciples along this line. They had been arguing among themselves as to which of them was the greatest. Jesus called a child to him, and said, "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me; for he who is least among you all is the one who is great." (Lk.9:48). We might summarize that he meant that unspiritual humility and meek service of others is the way of a follower of his.

4. The early church struggled with the problem, too, that many were taking

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH  
SUNDAY SCHOOL  
ATTENDANCE RECORD

\*\*\*\*\*

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER \_\_\_\_\_

Present

Absent

NUMBER OF PUPILS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT OF COLLECTION \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF VISITORS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

NAMES OF NEW MEMBERS

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



-----  
too great an extreme toward either spiritual contemplation without good works, or toward emphasizing the temporal needs of the body without enough attention to the spiritual. In the Scripture which we read for today, Romans 8:1-11, the writer deals with this problem of the tensions between the spiritual and the bodily.

In the ~~words~~ words we would use as our text he says, "if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you." If I interpret the meaning correctly, the writer is saying that if you have experienced the Spirit of God within you, you will find that you have a purpose for your body which gives it new life, new meaning, new vitality, new usefulness. It would be fair to state it by saying that real spirituality is tested by the unspiritual christian actions one does, by the attitudes one takes toward others.

### Conclusion:

1. We have pointed out that when folk use the word "spiritual" they usually refer chiefly to private personal ex-

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH  
SUNDAY SCHOOL  
ATTENDANCE RECORD

\*\*\*\*\*

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER \_\_\_\_\_  
Present                      Absent

NUMBER OF PUPILS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT OF COLLECTION \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF VISITORS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

NAMES OF NEW MEMBERS  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



-----  
periences of an individual with his God, or to similar experiences gained through a group experience. Through a bit of history we have attempted to understand how this meaning of the word "spiritual" came about.

2. We have discussed how the word "spiritual" is too often attached to processes such as speaking in tongues; how we use it to designate periods of meditation and personal or group processes which concentrate on seeking an experience of God without resulting in more Christ-like attitudes and actions in everyday life; how we easily develop an undue and revolting pride in our spiritual life and thereby lose the real essence of spirituality.

3. We have thought of Jesus and realized that he seldom let his own need for spiritual refreshment interfere with his taking the chance to give unspiritual physical service to unspiritual people.

4. We finished by pointing to a section in the Book of Romans which comes near the truth of the matter, when it points to the close and necessary inter-related-

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH  
SUNDAY SCHOOL  
ATTENDANCE RECORD

\*\*\*\*\*

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER \_\_\_\_\_  
Present                  Absent

NUMBER OF PUPILS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT OF COLLECTION \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF VISITORS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

NAMES OF NEW MEMBERS

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



ness of the spiritual and the physical.

5. ~~But~~ Our study seems to indicate that perhaps it is more christian to be very active in good will and good works to other people than to spend a great deal of time in aloof contemplation and cultivation of spiritual truths and spiritual riches for oneself. The motive for such good will and good works must be a real concern for others. This concern is based on a love of God rather than on trying to qualify for eternal life.

6. The truth needs repeating, that spirit and body can not be separated in this life; that the proof of a true spiritual life is in ones Christlike attitudes and actions. A private spiritual life is necessary. But ~~if~~ it is suspect if it is not demonstrated by unspiritual christian acts. For one, if I have to choose between withdrawal from the world for spiritual contemplation and active service and work in the world, I'd choose to live in the world. It's better to be a practicing unspiritual christian than a spiritual hermit.

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH  
SUNDAY SCHOOL  
ATTENDANCE RECORD

\*\*\*\*\*

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER \_\_\_\_\_

Present

Absent

NUMBER OF PUPILS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT OF COLLECTION \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF VISITORS PRESENT \_\_\_\_\_

NAMES OF NEW MEMBERS

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_