

# The Candle of the Lord

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## Introduction

Turn in your Bibles, please, to Proverbs, chapter 20. As you open your Bible to this portion of the Word of God, we would like to remind you that we are studying the second section of the book of Proverbs which begins with chapter 10 and concludes with chapter 22, verse 16, comprising some 375 proverbs. We said that one of the best ways to study this particular section of the book was to state a principle found in any one proverb, then gather together around that particular principle of truth the proverbs which were related to it. We did that with a great many of them.

Then we came across a number of proverbs which did not lend themselves to that kind of discussion. Rather, they were considered special texts in the sense that they have been used by ministers of the Word of God down through the ages as texts for sermons, and the messages have been abundantly blessed of God. These passages of Scripture have to be considered individually as far as the book of Proverbs is concerned because there is no other way to consider them.

The one that we want to consider with you now is chapter 20, verse 27. Notice as we read:

Proverbs 20:

*27 The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.*

Since it is the one verse we will be considering, we would like to read it with you again so that the words might be firmly fixed in your mind. Again we read:

Proverbs 20:

*27 The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.*

As we look at this particular verse of Scripture, naturally, we wonder exactly what subject ought to be given to it. We need to fix our minds on the information related to the subject, so that we will have something that we can carry away with us that will be of benefit and blessing. I am going to suggest that we consider what this verse of Scripture has to teach about the spirit of man because it is a unique passage of Scripture, and if it would not be interpreted as being sacrilegious, I would say that it is almost amusing some of the comments you read in commentary about this particular passage of Scripture. It seems there is a definite lack of understanding as to what God actually had in mind when He said, "The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly."

## Man is a Tripartite Being

I believe that basic to our understanding of this passage of Scripture is a recognition that we are tripartite beings; that is, every human being is a tripartite being, made up of body, soul and spirit. Many passages of Scripture would emphasize this, but we call to your attention what is recorded in I Thessalonians, chapter 5, verse 23. Perhaps you will want to mark that verse in your Bible because you discover, as you visit with people about things of God's Word, that everybody does not accept that man is a tripartite being. Here in I Thessalonians, chapter 5, verse 23, you read:

### I Thessalonians 5:

*23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Paul was looking forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his prayer was that the entire believer—body, soul, and spirit—be preserved blameless until that great event.

If you are familiar with your Bibles, you know that sometimes the words *soul* and *spirit* are used interchangeably because the characteristics of the soul and of the spirit, in some areas, are somewhat alike. Though they are used interchangeably, we must not for one moment think the spirit and the soul are one and the same, for they are not.

The first time the spirit is mentioned in the Bible (you understand we are not talking about the Holy Spirit, who is part of the Godhead, but the spirit of man), is in Genesis, chapter 2, verse 7. You will recall that the passage of Scripture is the record of the apex of God's creation. He had created everything else and He looked upon it and said that it was good. Then He said that there was a need for something else and that was that God would create man. In a recapping of the information that is given to you in chapter 1, verse 26, we read:

### Genesis 1:

*26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*

In the recap in chapter 2, you will notice verse 7:

### Genesis 2:

*7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*

Here we have the tripartite being again. He created, first, his body out of the dust of the ground. Then He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. As you look at that verse, you say, "I see only the words *body* and *soul*. I don't see anything about the *spirit*." It would be important for us to call to your attention that the word *breath*, in our English text, and the word *spirit* both come from this Hebrew word *neshamah*. That word indicates the emphasis upon the spirit more than it does the breath of the individual concerned. Turn to Job, chapter, 26, where Job is answering the criticism that was given to



him by Bildad, one of the false comforters who had come to sit with him in the midst of his trials and tribulations and encouraged him somewhat, but, like the other two friends, failed in the encouragement because of the wrong diagnosis. Job answered Bildad:

### Job 26:

- 1 *But Job answered and said,*
- 2 *How hast thou helped him that is without power? how savest thou the arm that hath no strength?*
- 3 *How hast thou counselled him that hath no wisdom? and how hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is?*
- 4 *To whom hast thou uttered words? and whose spirit came from thee?*

Notice the word *spirit* there in verse 4. It is a translation of this Hebrew word *neshamah*. What Job is saying to Bildad is: "To whom did you ever give a spirit? God breathed into man's nostrils the spirit of life, and man became a living soul."

Going back to Genesis, chapter 2, verse 7, if you read the word *spirit* for *breath*, you have exactly what happened in the Scriptures. The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the spirit of life, and man became a living soul.

There is something else that needs to be called to your attention, and that is that there is another word for *spirit* in relation to man that is used in the Old Testament. It is the Hebrew word *ruwach*. This word *ruwach* is used interchangeably with the Hebrew word *neshamah*, and when you are reading a passage of Scripture, you may not always know in the English text which Hebrew word is in question. It doesn't make a great deal of difference except in certain cases where the context would lead you to decide that maybe *breath* was meant instead of *spirit*, and then you would need to know the difference.

Turn with me, please, to Zechariah, chapter 12. Here again God is speaking of His judgment, which was to be brought upon the nation of Israel in due season. He mentioned how this judgment is going to be related to all human beings in that particular area. In verse 1, we find the use of this particular word to which we make reference. Notice the words:

### Zechariah 12:

- 1 *The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.*

When you see the word *burden* in an Old Testament passage of Scripture, it is in this sense referring to a message of judgment. Notice again:

### Zechariah 12:

- 1 *The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.*

Whenever God's importance is called to one's attention in the Old Testament, as we have pointed out to you before, reference is often made to His creative power and His creative force. You will notice in this verse that God stretched forth the heavens and He laid the foundations of the earth as part of His creative power. In addition to that, you will notice, He formed the spirit of man within him. In this instance, the word that is used is the word *ruwach*, so we recognize when we read Proverbs, chapter 20, verse 27, that what God is talking about is the spirit of man—not the body, not the soul, but the spirit of man.

## Purpose of the Spirit of Man

Many people misunderstand what God has in mind in this verse without understanding the real purpose of the spirit of man. If you recall what we read in Proverbs, chapter 20, verse 27, you notice that God said in the Word that the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord. That leads us to ask ourselves, what is the purpose of the spirit of man? The simplest definition of the spirit of man is discussed for you in I Corinthians, chapter 2. Paul is talking about the marvelous things that are related to the wisdom of God. He said in verse 8:

I Corinthians 2:

8 *Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

He said that if the kings of this world had known that wisdom, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, but even considering the depth of that wisdom, there is so much more that most of us don't know. He expresses it in the words of verse 9:

I Corinthians 2:

9 *But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

So often when this verse is read, people begin to talk about the glories of Heaven. I am sure the glories of Heaven could be included in part of that which God has prepared for those who love Him, but certainly we are not supposed to wait until we get to Heaven to find out what those glories are because in verse 10, you read:

I Corinthians 2:

10 *But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*

The Holy Spirit of God reveals these things to man, but in order for the Holy Spirit to reveal these things to man, it is essential for Him to have an instrument through which He can reveal those things. You have never heard a dog barking about the deep things of God. You have never heard a cat meowing about the deep things of God, and you never will because they don't understand them; they never will understand them. You may train dogs and cats or other animals to do a certain number of tricks that cause you to wonder if they do not have the level of intelligence of at least some people you know; but even though they are very smart in relation to their tricks, they are not in the category that the most ignorant human beings you know are because they lack one thing: They have a body and they have a soul, but they do not have the



spirit of man which God placed in man, the height of His creation.

Look at verse 11:

I Corinthians 2:

11 *For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.*

12 *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.*

You see how the Holy Spirit of God relates the two truths. In every man there is that which we call *the spirit of man* or which our text calls *the candle*. The Holy Spirit, who knows all of the deep things of God, is able through that candle to reveal to man the things of God. There is no way for man to understand the things of God save as the Spirit of God deals with the candle, in the terms of our text. So, if you wanted another word for *spirit*, you might call it *intellect*; you might call it *the ability man has to commune with God*.

We have before you the fact that the word *candle* is used in the text. The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord. The word *candle* is not a happy choice of English words because the Hebrew word from which it comes should be translated by the word *lamp*. There is a vast difference between a candle and a lamp. A candle burns of itself. It provides light of itself, but the lamp which is spoken of in our text can only provide light when something is done to it. The lamp must be lighted. The lamp must have something added to it. The lamp must have oil added to it before it can give any kind of light at all. We emphasize that to you because it is only as you understand in Proverbs, chapter 20, verse 20, that the word *candle* in verse 27 is translated by the word *lamp*.

### **When Adam Sinned, the Spirit Died**

It is interesting to notice that verse of Scripture from the standpoint of the truth that it presents. Notice:

Proverbs 20:

20 *Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.*

The word *lamp*, in Proverbs, chapter 20, verse 20, is the translation of this word *niyr*, in Proverbs, chapter 20, verse 27. Did you notice in verse 20 that the lamp was put out? I emphasize that to you because I would like to remind you that the spirit of man which God intended for the purpose of communicating with man faced a very real failure. The historical record of the failure is found in the book of Genesis. When Adam and Eve sinned, speaking in the terms of our text, the lamp went out. When Adam and Eve sinned, the spirit died, if you want to use terms of the scriptural commentaries on that event.

Let's look at those scriptural commentaries, asking you to turn first to Ephesians, chapter 2. Remember, before the fall, Adam communed with God. Remember, before the fall, Adam understood the mind of God. That is the reason Adam could do the things that he did in the garden of Eden in relation to the naming of all creation, which would seem superhuman to us and is superhuman in our fallen state. But when Adam sinned, the light of the candle went out, or in the words of Ephesians, chapter 2, the spirit died. Every person born into this world, though born a living soul, is born with his spirit dead, as far as communication



with God, understanding the things of God, is concerned. In Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 1, we read:

## Ephesians 2:

- 1 *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;*
- 2 *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:*
- 3 *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

Notice in verse 1: “You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins...” He wasn't talking about your body. The body is very much alive from the day of your birth, but your response to the things of God has not been alive, and only when God quickens that dead spirit through the power of the Holy Spirit of God do you begin to understand the things of the Spirit of God. As we read in the portion of the Word in Corinthians at which we looked a moment ago, the things of God, the natural man, cannot understand, for they are spiritually discerned. Only as the Holy Spirit reveals them to the quickened spirit of man can they be understood.

I am never discouraged when somebody says to me, as they do occasionally, “You know, I brought somebody to church. They weren't saved, and they didn't have the faintest idea what you were talking about. They were bored to tears.” Well, what would you expect them to be but bored? What would you expect them to be if they didn't understand what I was talking about? How could they understand? Their spirit is dead. The light is out.

## God Revealed Through the Candle

Look again at Ephesians, chapter 5, verse 8, to use the semantics of the passage in Proverbs. Notice:

## Ephesians 5:

- 8 *For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:*

Here the Spirit of God is saying that unbelievers walk in darkness. These Ephesian folks, at one time, were in darkness, but they were saved. The lamp was turned on; the candle was lit, if you want to express it that way, and they are supposed to walk in view of that fact. Christians have a greater responsibility than unbelievers because of the spirit of man which has been quickened, the lamp which has been lighted.

Recall the words of Proverbs, chapter 20, verse 27, again: “The spirit of man is a candle in the hand of the LORD, lighting the innermost parts of the belly.” I want you to notice that word *belly*. That is a rather uncouth word. We don't usually use it in polite language, but you do find it mentioned often in the Scriptures, and I think it would be wise for us to notice exactly what it does mean.

I would like to suggest to you that the word *belly* comes from the Hebrew word *beten* which speaks of a hollow space, and that is all that it means. You recall Proverbs, chapter 20, verse 27, said that the candle of the LORD searcheth out the innermost parts of the belly, and the two words really should go together—innermost belly. The word *innermost* comes from the Hebrew word *cheder*, which speaks of an inner



apartment. The picture, the figure of speech, is of a palace of many apartments; and the very inner apartment, the very center of activity where the king lives, is what is being spoken of here. When the Spirit of God chooses this word to speak of the innermost parts of the belly, what He was suggesting was that the candle of the LORD reaches into the most innermost part of the person. It gets down to the very center of being.

You and I do not have the ability of knowing what is going on in the innermost parts of any individual. Some of us become very adept at putting up a good front so that people simply do not know what is going on in the innermost parts of our belly, using the text. They might hear some of the rumblings sometimes, but they don't know for sure. Only God knows what is going on in the innermost parts of the belly, and in order to deal with that innermost part of the individual in question, He uses what we have already referred to as the candle of the Lord because the candle of the Lord actually becomes an instrument in God's hand, as the very text indicates. The spirit of man is a candle in the hand of the Lord.

This instrument to which we make reference, God uses first to make a revelation of Himself. The Holy Spirit of God, using the spirit of man, opens the eyes of man so that God is able to reveal Himself to man. There is no other way for God to be revealed to man except through this candle of which we speak.

I think it would be wise for us to recognize at the moment that it does represent a process, and only as you realize that will you be able to understand why there is a difference in the individuals with whom you deal. The process begins with the quickening to which we referred in Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 2. The Holy Spirit of God quickens the spirit. He lights the candle. He pours oil into the lamp, and then He uses two kinds of light to make possible the light that comes from this candle, and that two kinds of light is described in Psalm 19. We don't take the time to turn there, but we remind you that Psalm 19 speaks of the word of nature in the first half and the Word of the Lord in the last.

When God quickens this human spirit, the average man looks about him and he notices a consistency and an order in relation to all of God's creation. That consistency and order will awaken him to the realization that there is a creature greater than he and that that creature should be worshiped and adored, but he has only that light. Then he tries to make that creature what he thinks it ought to be and the various kinds of idols that have characterized the idolatry of the world come into being because the revelation is not complete. But if that quickened spirit takes the information that is given in the first part of Psalm 19 and goes into the last part of Psalm 19, he goes into the Word of the living God. When the Word of God, which is sharper than any two-edged sword, which gets down into that innermost apartment to which we have made reference, dividing asunder the bone and the marrow, then the message gets through.

I like the way the message reaches the heart of the individual as it is described in II Corinthians, chapter 4, verse 5. You will recognize in this portion of the Word of God that God is talking about the light that man gives to the individual—the light that shines into the heart of man when man permits the truth of the Word of God to reach his heart. We read:

## II Corinthians 4:

5 *For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.*

Now notice verse 6:



## II Corinthians 4:

6 *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

7 *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

So you see what happens. The same God that commanded light to shine out of darkness in the days of creation, through the human spirit, the candle of the Lord has caused the light to shine into our human hearts in the face of Jesus Christ.

### **Candle Used to Reveal Man to Himself**

This candle of the Lord, which we said is an instrument in His hand, is used for another purpose, and I don't know that I would be dogmatic as to which order is followed. Whether the revelation to which I have just referred is given first or the revelation to which I call attention now is given first, but I do know you will not have one without the other, for God not only uses the candle of the Lord in order to reveal Himself to man, but He uses the candle of the Lord to reveal man to Himself.

Do you remember what was read in our original text? Are the words still fresh in your mind? Notice again:

## Proverbs 20:

27 *The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.*

The word *searching* there is a word that describes a diligent search. Nothing is hidden. When God uses this candle, things are brought to life that nobody had any idea were there. That is the reason some Bible commentators say that the candle of the Lord is the conscience of men, that the conscience makes you conscious of sin in your life, and only as the conscience makes you conscious of sin will you recognize your need of a Savior. Many passages of Scripture emphasize the search that is carried on by God with this candle, but we would like to call to your attention two passages of Scripture, one of them in the Old Testament, a passage that you don't often look at, in the book of Lamentations. This book follows immediately after the book of Jeremiah for they are the lamentations of Jeremiah. In chapter 3, Jeremiah is making an appeal to the people of Israel in the light of God's judgment upon them. He said, in verse 40:

## Lamentations 3:

40 *Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.*

Do you remember what we read in I Corinthians, chapter 2? "Who knoweth what is in man, but the spirit of man?" The question is rhetorical. Nobody knows what is in man except the spirit of man. Let us search and try our ways with the same candles that God uses when He wants to reveal to us what we are. What is that candle? The intellect as it is illuminated by the Word of the living God.

Sometimes it is difficult for us to really search. We don't always look in all the corners of our heart because we are not all as honest as we ought to be. We even fool ourselves about that, so I call to your attention the last passage of Scripture for meditation in this study. Look at Psalm 139, verses 23-24:



## Psalm 139:

23 *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:*

24 *And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

### Conclusion

Have you ever wondered how it is that God is going to search your heart? Have you ever wondered how it is that God is going to know your thoughts and make that revelation to you? Have you been praying that prayer without a full understanding of the very practical way that it is going to be done? If I had asked some folk how they expected God to do this, they probably would have to say, "I don't have any idea, but I think it is a pretty good prayer." It is a good prayer to pray, but expect God to do it in the way that He said He would do it. How is that? The spirit of man is a candle in the hands of the Lord, and with it, He searches diligently the innermost parts of the belly. When God uses the Word of God in connection with your human spirit, causing your intellect to respond to the truth of the Word, the search is made thorough. It is not going to do any good to ask God to search your heart if you don't get into the Word and let God use the Word to illuminate the spirit in which the light has gone out. The candle of the Lord. What is it? It is your human spirit which God uses to search your heart. You need not ever walk in darkness.

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