



July 15, 2007

## Living Life in the Spirit

Were you listening carefully to our Gospel reading this morning? From John 16 the night before Jesus is crucified he says that it is to our advantage that He goes. And I ask a simple question, “do you believe that?” I remember I was reading this passage a few months ago and in reading it I remember thinking to myself I don’t think I believe that I’m not sure sometimes that its to my advantage that Jesus is gone. How many times have we said to ourselves or said to friends, “Oh if Jesus were here questions would be answered, or if I were alive when Jesus was in Galilee”, how many times have we said that? But Jesus says that it is to our advantage that He is gone that it is better for us that He is not here. Do we believe that? I remember after I was reading this passage and thinking about it asking myself what does Jesus mean? Why is it to our advantage that He isn’t here? You see, the reason its to our advantage is because he’s talking about the Holy Spirit here. It’s to our advantage because if He doesn’t leave the comforter will not come. But what does that mean? As I think about it as I look more into the Gospel of John and other places its advantageous for us now that the Holy Spirit is here for a couple of reasons.

The first reason is the kingdom cannot be brought unless Jesus died, unless He was crucified and resurrected and ascended to God the Father. Salvation and atonement to sins and the power to live new lives would not be here. See if Jesus didn’t die and if He weren’t resurrected we would still have our sins not forgiven by God. It is the Holy Spirit that is the seal of that salvation and He could not come unless Jesus had brought that salvation.

Also it’s not just for our salvation that it’s to our advantage that Jesus is gone but you see the Holy Spirit is God’s very presence living inside of us to guide us to empower us and if Jesus didn’t die and go back to the Father we wouldn’t have that presence dwelling

inside of us. We would still be living our old ways we wouldn't have the Spirit inside of us. One author said that, "the coming of the Holy Ghost was not merely to supply the absence of the Son but to complete his presence." When Jesus came he was God incarnate, God in the flesh, we could see and hear and touch and look at but the Holy Spirit is God's presence living inside of us the third member of the Trinity dwelling in our hearts. So the Spirit came to complete the presence of God amongst his people so I think we need to talk about the Holy Spirit. I feel like the Holy Spirit is one of the most neglected doctrines in evangelical Christianity and I don't want any of you to worry that I'm going to turn Pentecostal on you but I feel like the Christian church is missing out on this vital area.

This is the third member of the Trinity we're talking about and so I want to talk about one of the best passages of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. It is written by Paul and it is found in Romans 8:1-13. They read *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live."*

There are several undercurrents that I also want to talk about in this passage, things that Paul doesn't explicitly say but they are central to his thinking that he has either mentioned it in Romans before or he has mentioned in his other epistles a worldview that he has that we may be missing because he doesn't explicitly tell us. The first undercurrent is the new age that we now after the death and resurrection exaltation of Jesus Christ are living in a completely new age. We so often talk about how we're new people and that's true but I think that's limiting what Paul was thinking that because of the coming of the Spirit and the death of Christ and the resurrection we are living in a completely different age a different era. Its like if you grew up in the 1920's and then you missed the next 80 years and then started growing up now it would be completely different you wouldn't recognize or understand anything and I think that's what Paul is communicating here. The old age is gone and the new age completely different era the age of death and sin has passed away. That's the first undercurrent that is going on here.

The second is the new covenant the Spirit is promised as part of the new covenant in our Old Testament reading Ezekiel 36 we saw that there will come a day when God will sprinkle his people with clean water and put his spirit on them and that was said to Israel and now that's coming to pass in us. The new covenant isn't merely confined to Ezekiel I want to read from Jeremiah 31, which has one of the greatest passages about the new covenant. Jeremiah 31:31 reads, *"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them, " declares the LORD. "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."* Now God was speaking this to Jeremiah to the people of Israel and the problem the people of Israel had is that they couldn't live according to the law and here God promises to change their inner nature their inner being so

they can be obedient to Him no more would there be intermediaries such as prophets or priests to teach the people about God with this new covenant God says that all people will know him from the least of them to the greatest of them. The fellowship with God is restored that which was lost at the fall is restored. People can have an intimate knowledge of God and can be capable of following Him now and the Holy Spirit dwelling within them makes this possible. The new covenant bring an end to the curse of the fall and provides salvation for the human race. The spirit dwelling within us makes this possible. The issue here and now is the heart, which needs to be changed the heart, which is incapable of following the external demands of the law. Jesus said in Luke 23 that when he takes the cup at the Last Supper and blesses it he says this is the cup of the new covenant, which I bring with my blood because Jesus' death and His resurrection bring about this new covenant. This covenant is fulfilled right now amongst us that we are seeing the fulfillment of God's promises.

So those are the two undercurrents going on this text. Now lets turn to the text itself Romans chapter 8 comes after chapters 6 and 7 where Paul describes sinners helpless under sins power. The sinners doomed to condemnation and death. And then we look at verse 1 of Romans chapter 8 where it says, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death". We also see the Holy Spirit's work is created by the sacrifice of Jesus as an atonement for sin that the spirit doesn't work on His own He works in conjunction with Jesus Christ who works in conjunction with the father so there's an amazing Trinitarian statement here about how the trinity works. If we are in Christ condemnation is passed and we are not guilty and also the forgiveness that we receive should empower and precede our battle against sin.

The first thing Paul writes here is that we are no longer condemned and then he goes on in the rest of the chapter talking about dying of sin. Then in verse two we see Paul writes "through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death". There is a transformation and a living out of that forgiveness that we've been set free from the law of sin and death

because of that forgiveness. Then verses 5 through 8 Paul details the radical difference between the believer and the non-believer. He says that only through the spirit can we please God and with the Spirit we live in a new age as I said before. Age not characterized by sin and death but an age that is characterized by righteousness and light. So I want to talk about what it means to live life in the Spirit. There are a couple of principles from this passage that I would like to pull from.

The first way we live life in the Spirit is walk in the Spirit. Paul writes in verse 4, "in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit". Walking entails a total orientation of life walking is a metaphor of the complete Christian life and so walking in the Spirit then means our entire life is centered around this that its centered around living in the light of the Spirit's presence in our lives. Paul details further in Ephesians 4 what walking in the Spirit looks like. Ephesians 4:1 says, "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace". So I ask you and I ask myself, "Are we living in this manner? Are we living in a manner of walking in the Spirit which is shown as love and gentleness and preserving unity?" Or are you so caught up in what you want always wanting things your way and thinking that if other people don't want it that way they're wrong and they should go away. That's being divisive that's not walking in the Spirit that's walking in the flesh still. The things that we want our way are not always the best and they're not always good so do we value others' opinions? Or do we always seek to make things our way? Do we have a desire to learn God's word? The Spirit so often works in conjunction with the study of God's word the Spirit helps us to know God better that's what Jeremiah 31 says. Often we do this through studying God's revealed word because that's his revelation to us and the Spirit doesn't always do that but so many insights of my life have come from studying God's word and I've come to learn more about Him from that. Living life in the Spirit entails walking in the Spirit but also setting your mind on things of the Spirit.

Romans 8: 5-6 say, “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.” This means setting your mind on things that are true and eternal fixing your mind upon it and not being distracted by other things. Have you ever watched a really good movie, maybe read a really good book and you’ve been so caught up in what’s going on that you’ve been completely oblivious to what’s going on around you? Wives sometimes you see that in your husbands maybe they’re watching TV and you ask them to do a chore and they seem to completely ignore you and maybe that’s not just because they’re fixated on the TV but that’s what it means to set your mind on things of the spirit not be distracted by other things. We have this weakness and this vulnerableness due to the fall.

Paul writes in Philippians 4:8, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things”. That’s what we should be focusing on. So I ask you what are you filling your minds with? We watch TV and see advertisements and those always on earthly things which promote materialism and discontentment and show you what you should have and what you don’t have and what you want and that’s not setting your mind on things in the Spirit. That’s setting your mind on things of the earth. What are you filling your mind with?

Living a life in the Spirit means number one walk in the Spirit, number two setting your mind on things of the Spirit and number three means putting death the deeds of the body by the Spirit. Verse 13 says, “For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live”. The thing is even though Paul assumes we’re in this new age and receive the Spirit the pull for sin is still there. Daily we have to put to death the deeds of the body and putting it to death means to render something ineffective. I think this comes from the idea that in the temple God’s presence that dwelt there and no unclean thing could enter there. The similarity here is that we have the Spirit dwelling in us, which is God’s very presence the same presence that dwelt in the temple. We are to live to keep unclean things from

entering us. We are to be clean before God and as you look over these things and maybe even read Romans 8 it seems that its something we do walking in the Spirit, setting your mind on thing of Spirit that's something we accomplish on our own. But human activity is necessary for this but its not apart from the work of the Spirit but the Spirit is working in us and we should be seeing the Spirits working in us and this is accomplished through prayer, to becoming obedient to God's word, the Spirit works in conjunction with our efforts. We should be seeing the fruit of the Spirit continually evidenced in our lives that's how we know the Spirit is working in our lives. I ask are we evidencing these things in our lives. So often I think we couch things in Christian terms to make them sound spiritual and sound good but really they're things that are according to the flesh and are wrong and bad.

It is to our advantage that Jesus is gone because the Spirit is here to convict us with these evil things in our hearts bringing us to repentance. The Spirit convicts the world of sin. Dowe long for the Spirit to be pored out in our midst and see things in our lives that we need to change. It is to our advantage that Jesus is gone because the Spirit is here, are we clenching the Spirit? Is Spirit moving among us and we don't like what he's doing? Or are we actively seeking and following his guidance allowing him to empower us to live these holy lives that we are to live? I exhort you walk in the Spirit, set your mind on the things of the Spirit and put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit.