**LIFE THROUGH THE SPIRIT**

June 20, 2024

Romans 8:1-16 In Romans 7, Paul was expressing frustration over his internal battle with sin. Despite his desire to do what was right, he found himself unable to live obediently. In chapter 8, he explains God’s solution to this problem.

The Law Has Been Fulfilled for Us Read vv. 1-4. The opening paragraph to chapter 8 is a declaration of the security that we have in Christ. This provides a great opportunity for you to review the gospel. Our righteousness is not based on what we do or how closely we keep the law (God’s commandments) but is based solely on the perfect life that Jesus lived. When God looks at us, He sees us as if we have lived the morally faultless life that Jesus did. He literally gives us credit for Jesus’ righteousness, just as Jesus literally took the blame for all our sin. Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who have placed their faith in Christ.

What Paul calls the “law of sin and death” is the law of God revealed in the Old Testament. He doesn’t use that description because there is anything wrong with the law, but because there is something wrong with us. The Law is the perfect representation of God’s holy character. The problem is that we are hopelessly given to sin. The Law is like an x-ray machine. It shows us we have a terminal problem (sin) but was not designed to fix the problem –only diagnosis it. Our sin made us unable to obey the law and separated us from God. God solved our problem in two ways. First, by sending His Son to do what we never could. He perfectly obeyed the law in His life, and fully satisfied the wrath of God in His death. Second, He has given us His Spirit to enable us to live a life pleasing to God. It is to this second principle that Paul now turns.

You Now Have a New Power Source to Live a Godly Life Read vv. 5-8. This paragraph is filled with contrasts. Paul is establishing two categories of people: those who live according to the sinful nature, and those who live according to the Spirit. Following the sinful nature only leads to death, while the Holy Spirit brings life and peace. His point is that, as Christians, we now have a new power source – the Holy Spirit – to enable us to live a godly life.

This Power Source Is Within You Read vv. 9-11. Until now, Paul has been using declarative statements. In this paragraph, he exclusively uses conditional statements: “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.” “If Christ is in you...your spirit is alive because of righteousness.” He is speaking to those who claim to have faith in Christ, and observing the things that will necessarily be true if their faith is genuine. The central promise is that the Holy Spirit is given to all believers without exception. That means we all have, in the present moment, full access to all the power we need to live righteous lives; and, in the day to come, even our dead bodies will be made alive again.

**Choose to Rely on This Power Source**  1. We are secure in Christ, and our righteousness comes entirely from Him. 2. There are two kinds of people in the world: those who live according to their sinful nature, and those who live according to the Holy Spirit. 3. If you are a Christian, the Holy Spirit lives in you, to give you power.

It seems that the righteous life that the Spirit produces ought to be automatic, and always present in believers. But based on the fourth paragraph, (and our experience), this isn’t the case. Apparently, Christians can choose to live according to the sinful nature despite the life-giving presence of the Spirit. The results of this are devastating, so Paul warns against it here, and elsewhere. Life controlled by the sinful nature is deadly and may even be evidence that a person doesn’t genuinely believe in Christ. Look at 1 Corinthians 2:14-3:3 to see an example of Paul addressing this category of people who he calls “worldly.” They are Christians who act like non-Christians! Paul consistently writes to address this as unacceptable, and to offer a solution

How We Can Know We Are empowered God has given us His Spirit to free us from our bondage to our sinful nature. By yielding to Him, and allowing Him to live through us, we can experience all the blessings of obedience. God doesn’t call us to produce more righteousness, but simply to yield to the Spirit and allow Him to produce righteousness in our lives. The Bible calls this being “filled with the Spirit.” The Spirit always indwells all Christians, but we are not always empowered or directed (filled). Just as wind fills the sail of a sailboat, thereby determining its speed and direction, so also the Spirit fills our yielded lives giving us power, and determining where we go. The Spirit-filled life is the Christ-directed life, by which Christ lives His life in and through us, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is by faith that we experience the empowerment and directing of the Holy Spirit. Four conditions must be met in our lives:

**1.** We must genuinely desire to be filled (that is, directed and empowered) by the Spirit. In John 7:37-39, Jesus said, “‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive.” We need to thirst for Him in our lives.

**2.** We must repent – turn from sin and confess it to God. He is the Holy Spirit. If we are to enjoy His power in our life, we can’t harbor sin. In 1 John 1:9, God promises, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” This enables us to experience His great power in our lives.

3. We must yield – surrendering control of our life to God. Romans 12:1 urges us, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God this is your spiritual act of worship.” To enjoy more empowerment, we don’t need more of the Holy Spirit; He needs more of us. The Spirit has full reign in our lives when we express with our hearts our desire to have Him control all areas of our life: our dating life, career, entertainment, etc.

**4.** We must believe that God will be faithful to His Word and lead, direct, and empower us. In 1 John 5:14-15, we are promised, “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us whatever we ask we know that we have what we asked of Him.” Since we know that it is His will that we be filled, we simply need to trust Him and experience this by faith.

As those conditions are met, you can pray in faith asking God to fill you with His Spirit as He commanded you to be. Thank Him that He will direct and empower your life as you continue to trust in Him.

**Questions**

**Read Romans 8:1-4**. 1. Why are Christians (“those who are in Christ Jesus”) free from condemnation?

2. According to v. 4, what should be the result in our lives?

3. Who is the Spirit?

**Read vv. 5-8.** 4. In this paragraph, Paul is setting up a contrast. What is the opposite of life according to sinful nature?

5. What is true of a person controlled by sinful nature?

Read vv. 9-11 6. Every verse in the next paragraph contains the word “if.” What is Paul teaching here?

7. Are you sure you have the Holy Spirit? Why?

**Read vv. 12-16.** 8. Since Paul has said all believers have the Spirit living in them, it would seem that all Christians would automatically live righteous lives all the time, but apparently that is not the case. What is implied by Paul’s command to live according to the Spirit?

9. Does the Spirit live in all believers? Does He fill all believers?

10. Below are four passages of Scripture. Each teaches something that concerns our on-going experience of the Holy Spirit’s direction and empowerment of our lives. What principles do you see, relating to our ability to enjoy the filling of the Holy Spirit. **1. John 7:37-39 2. 1 John 1:5-9 3. Romans 12:1 4. 1 John 5:14-15**

**Apply**  11. Look at the contrasts in Galatians 5:19-23. Which acts of the sinful nature and fruit of the Spirit in that passage remind you of yourself?

12. Which ones would you like to be more evident in your life?

13. How does your view of God affect your willingness to yield these areas to His Spirit? For example, how would viewing God as generous, kind, trustworthy?

14. How can you experience the Spirit’s power and direction, at this very moment?

15. How do we experience this again (20 minutes from now) after we again have sinned and taken back control of our lives?

**Please select at least four (4) questions and be prepared to answer them in class.**



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**Learn** “We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Thessalonians 1:3

**A Sincere Faith**

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Background on 1 Thessalonians the Christians at Thessalonica were young believers, perhaps not much more than a year old in their faith. From Paul’s rather gushing praises, they’re a healthy and growing church, actually becoming known among the other churches for their contagious faith. It might be helpful to read Acts 17:1-15 as preparation for the study in which the story of Paul’s founding of this church is contained

The occasion for writing the letter to the Thessalonians seems to be four-fold. Paul’s **first** reason for writing is to express thanks and encouragement for the spiritual health of the church. **Second**, there seemed to be efforts to undermine Paul’s reputation and question his sincerity. As a result, a great deal of the letter is an explanation and defense of the sincerity of Paul’s love for the Thessalonians. **Third**, there seemed to be some confusion and wrong thinking related to the Lord’s return, so in both letters to the Thessalonians this takes a prominent theme. **Last,** though they were spiritually growing, Paul includes steady encouragements to “excel still more” and to continue to make progress in their faith.

1 Thessalonians 1:2-4 Apparently, Paul’s sincerity has been questioned by some of his critics. But before defending the sincerity of his love which he does in chapter two he begins by praising the Thessalonians for the sincerity of their faith.

The sincerity of their faith was manifested in good works, their love manifested in labor, and their hope manifested in perseverance. It’s important to note the correlation between the unseen quality and its visible manifestation. How do you measure something invisible like faith? By external works. How do you measure the unseen depth of someone’s love? By what they’re willing to endure (toil or labor). How do you measure the veracity of someone’s hope in the Lord? By their perseverance through adversity. Labor, work and perseverance are the external manifestations of invisible qualities: the metrics by which we calibrate faith, hope, and love.

1 Thessalonians 1:4-6 Paul supplies additional evidence for the authenticity of their faith from what he -observed when he first came to preach to them. In I Thessalonians 1:5, Paul mentions that an authentic sign of their true faith is that the gospel came “with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with deep conviction.” He notes that he could clearly see God at work in them because when he preached the gospel to them, his words were vested with power from the “Holy Spirit.” This power produced a deep “conviction” of sin within the hearts of the Thessalonians, and a powerful transformation of life.

He further remembers how they had instantly become imitators of both him and the Lord. This is a handy definition of “disciple:” a person who learns from and imitates both the life of mature believers as well as Christ. The Thessalonians’ hunger to be disciples portrayed the reality of their conversion. Last, just as the Holy Spirit was able to create sorrow in their hearts over sin, Paul notes that their ability to endure suffering with joy also displayed the presence of the Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 1:7-10 Paul again returns to the authenticating signs of faith, hope and love, but this time, he sites examples. Their faith was manifested in their commitment to share the gospel with others. As a result, the gospel “rang out” from them (v. 8). Their hope was seen in their waiting for the Son to return (v. 10) and their love was seen in how they turned from idols to “serve the living and true God” (v. 9).

Paul sites the powerful witness of the Thessalonian Christians as a testimony to the sincerity of their faith. As Paul puts extra emphasis here, the study follows suit. The word “rang-out” carries the picture of an echo, which persistently expands outward in ever-widening circles, in fact their faith had become know “everywhere.” it’s not just that the Thessalonians engaged in evangelism, but it flowed from their lives in what Scripture identifies as the reflexive way in which sincere faith expresses itself

While Paul is not addressing a specific sinful condition among the Thessalonians, this snapshot of sincere conversion (turning from God to idols) is instructive as to what elements will be lacking in our life if we continue to cling to our old lives, sin and idols. Furthermore, faith, hope and love, as demonstrated by the Thessalonians, must continue to be cultivated, which is why Paul still “urges” them to do these things “more and more” (4:1). We never “arrive” in our walks with God, and even when we’re healthy and growing, we need to be diligent to continue upward and onward and retain Christ as our first and only love.

II Timothy 2:2 in considering how the message of the gospel “rings out,” the study takes a detour to II Timothy 2:2. in this passage, Paul encourages Timothy to find reliable men to train in the faith, who, likewise, will train other reliable men. This is the model of ministry which Christ demonstrated in His discipleship. It’s the idea of spiritual multiplication.

Let’s say in one year, you disciplined three people and taught them each how to share their faith. And the next year, they each discipled three people and taught them how to share their faith, and this cycle continued. How long would it take to reach 7 billion people? The answer, surprisingly, is only about 19 years. This is often referred to as “spiritual multiplication” and it’s what we see evidenced in the ministry of Jesus. He invested in a small number of disciples, but that number rapidly turned into millions.

This provides a helpful picture of how the message of the gospel (I Corinthians 15:1-4)“rings out” in our lives and ministry and provides an easy to follow model of discipleship. PRAISE GOD!

**Questions**

**A Sincere Faith**  Read 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10.

1. In verses 2 and 3, what do you think Paul’s purpose was in saying these things to the Thessalonians? What effects in the hearts of his hearers do you think Paul wanted to produce?

2. Faith, hope and love demonstrated the sincerity of the Thessalonian’s faith. How were they demonstrated? How do you see these at work in your life?

3. What do you think is the distinction between works and labor? Why does faith only produce works, while love produces toil?

4. If hope produces perseverance, in practical terms, what does it mean to hope in Christ?

5. Reread v. 4-6 and then read Acts 17:1-10. As nothing overtly miraculous happened when Paul preached to the Thessalonians, what are the internal and external evidences that the gospel came to them in power?

6. What other evidence in the passage do you see for the authenticity of the Thessalonians’ conversion?

7. Pointing to the reality of their conversion, the Thessalonians felt sorrow (conviction) over their sin, but joy amidst terrible suffering. What things that used to make you happy, now bring conviction? What difficulties have strangely brought a sense of joy?

8. In verse 7-10, where do you, again, see the qualities of faith, hope and love alluded to?

9. In 7-10, how did God get the glory for what He did in their lives? A Faith That Multiplies

10. in 1:8, we see that a sincere faith is one that reproduces itself through the sharing the gospel. What does the image “rang out” convey? How do you think it “rang out?”

11. in what ways do you feel it was a more difficult task for them to spread the gospel than for you? In what ways might it be harder for you?

12. If you shared with 1,000 people a day, how long would it take to reach 7 billion people? What if you reached just three people a year and taught them to share their faith and they each did the same and so and so on. How long until you reached 7 billion?

13. Read II Timothy 2:2. Pictured, here, is the model of spiritual multiplication mentioned in the last question. Who has passed things on to you and who have you passed things on to?

14. What would distinguish a person as “reliable” or “qualified?” How do you see yourself in these terms?

15. Share about the time when the gospel powerfully invaded your life.

16. What would be an example of an “idol” today? in what ways did you “turn from idols” in coming to Christ? How do these idols still hold sway in your heart?

17. In what ways is the gospel “echoing out” from your life. Where should it be, but it’s not. 18. With whom could you invest time in a II Timothy 2:2 relationship? How would you initiate such a relationship?