

NOTES FROM PASTOR TIM'S SERMON 26th March 2023 pm

SERIES FROM ROMANS "Life in the Spirit" Part 2

"Everyday spiritual renewal"

Scripture references from the ESV

Romans 8:1-17 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.^[a] ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you^[b] free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,^[c] he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus^[d] from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

¹² So then, brothers,^[e] we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons^[f] of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Many of us live our Christian lives as if we need to pedal furiously to get anywhere, all the while ignoring the engine power that is available to us. We want to make progress in holiness and become more like Christ. We hate the sin we see in our lives and want to live in obedience to Christ. Yet we just don't seem to make much progress. It all seems like very hard work.

- We hate the sin, but cannot stop doing it, leaving us feeling guilty.
- We want to live in obedience to Jesus but we keep doing things he tells us not to do, and we don't do what he tells us to do.

We are like Paul, as he describes himself in **Romans 7: 18-19**. **For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.**

How we live seems to work like this: ²¹ **So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (Romans 7:21-24)**

There is no doubt that we are saved, because we have a heart that is oriented towards Christ, while an unsaved person is hostile to God and has no desire to please him. (vv7-8 above). However, we have never moved into a life that experiences the Holy Spirit of God on a day-to-day basis. The result is that we live with a sinful fear of both God and man, and our lives are no different from the world around us.

We do not see daily victory over sin and daily delighting in God.

We do not live in conscious awareness of the Spirit of God

We do not live lives that are dependent on the Spirit of God.

We need a spiritual renewal – a work of the Holy Spirit of God to make us more alive to Christ. That renewal needs to happen on a day-to-day basis, not just as a one-off experience. We need to live it out every day for the rest of our lives so that we see the fruit of the Spirit growing in us.

How would we know if we are living in the Spirit in this way? The big question is

Do you have assurance?

Romans 8 shows us that the Spirit of God is given to us not just to empower us but to give us assurance. It is out of that assurance that we will find ourselves living lives that

are free from the sinful fear of God and man, and free from the enslaving power of sin. The following seven questions will reveal the extent of the Spirit's work in us.

1. **Do you have assurance that you are no longer under the condemnation of God? (Romans 8:1).** Is that truth a deep reality in your heart. Do you have assurance that because of Christ's life, death and resurrection, God has ended all hostility towards you and is now completely for you?
2. **Do you have the assurance that when you die and your body is laid in the grave, your body will be raised to life (Romans 8:11).** The work of the Spirit assures believers that they will be raised to life in the same way Jesus was. Is that truth a deep reality in your heart that leaves you fearless in the face of death?
3. **Do you have the assurance that the Spirit is leading you every day? (Romans 8:14)** Do you daily experience the Spirit leading you into holiness, leading you to Christ and leading you to understand the truth of God's word. Do you experience the reality of that?
4. **Do you have the assurance that God is your heavenly Father and you are a child of God? (Romans 8:15).** Most of the time our lives are OK and we don't doubt that God is our Father who loves us, but sometimes life becomes so unbearable that that we begin to question whether God is truly our Father and whether he loves us. Then the Spirit comes in to witness in a special way that we are God's children. He works in our hearts so that we can cry Abba! Father! Is that your experience and do you know the reality of it?
5. **Do you have the assurance that you are praying in line with God's will, and God is hearing you? (Romans 8:26).** Do you experience the work of the Spirit to help you in your weakness, especially your weakness when it comes to prayer? When we experience the Spirit in us, our prayer life will be vibrant and alive. We will know that we are truly speaking with the living God and that what we are praying is in line with his will. We will truly know that he is hearing us. Is that the reality of your prayer life?
6. **Do you have the assurance that you are growing in holiness? (Romans 8:13 and other refs in this chapter).** The spirit of God works in us to kill sin. He is the Holy Spirit and he leads us into holiness. He is the Spirit of Christ and leads us into conformity to Christ. Are you experiencing the transforming work of the Spirit when it comes to sin?
7. **Do you have the assurance that you are eternally loved by God? (Romans 8:38-39)** The Spirit is not mentioned by name in these verses, but it is clearly the Spirit speaking to assure us that God's love for us is so rock solid that nothing can separate us from it. Is God's love a reality in your life? Are you overwhelmed by the love of God every single day, not just at some time in the past when you had a special experience?

- If your answer is **yes** to all of these questions as you work through them, then praise God, but remember that there is always more to be had.
- If your answer is **no**, then praise God because that assurance is available to you.

How can we experience more of the Spirit's work on a day-by-day basis, so that we will have the spiritual renewal we need to give us assurance and the strength to live a godly life?

First, however, there is a warning. The Spirit is described in the Bible as a wind, and none of us can control the wind. In the same way, we cannot control the Spirit of God. He is sovereign and blows where he wishes, when he wishes and how he wishes.

Two disciplines will help us experience the Spirit, but this is not like turning on a tap and getting water out!

It is a relational issue, not a mechanical issue. God may be gracious to you, and grant you an overwhelming fullness of the Spirit, but equally he may not, or he may not do so immediately. However, unless we are carrying out these disciplines, we will definitely not experience the daily renewal of the Spirit.

a) Set your mind on the things of the Spirit (v5 above). Paul tells us what these things are in **1 Corinthians 2:13-14**.

And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

He links the things of the Spirit with the word of God in the Bible.

Every day, our minds are bombarded with things that belong to the world, the flesh and the devil. What we watch on TV, on Netflix or on social media often grieves the Spirit of God and undermines the gospel by which we are saved. If we set our minds on those things, then we will grieve the Spirit rather than experiencing him. Our souls will start to die to the reality of Jesus Christ and we will find our Bible reading boring,

our Church worship uninspiring and our fellowship with other Christians uncomfortable. The command is to

Set your mind on the things of the Spirit

- If we are going to experience the Spirit, then we need to set our minds on the words given to the apostles by the Spirit of God – words which speak of the truths about Jesus Christ and how he has saved us from sin for his own glory.
- If we are going to experience the Spirit, we need to set our minds on the things the Spirit delights in. The Spirit delights in Jesus Christ and delights to make him known.

b) Put sin to death by the Spirit (v13). You cannot kill sin in your life through legalistic law keeping. All the law of God can do is show us what God requires, show us how we have failed and condemn us as the sinners we are. That is why it is described as the law of death (v2).

What we need is the work of the Spirit to kill the root of sin in our lives.

That root is always something in our heart that we love more than Christ. Sinful deeds come from hearts that have turned money, sex and power, among other things, into idols. Sinful deeds flow out of the heart that treasures God given gifts above the God who gave them. We need to cut the lifeline to those idols so that they die.

We do that by the Spirit, as we set our minds on the things of the Spirit.

**As we fill our minds with the words of scripture,
so the Spirit points us to the beauty of Christ, the work of Christ and the love of God
in Christ.**

- Then he creates within us a deep love for Christ that eclipses our love for those idols.
- Then we begin to experience the assurance of the things we read of in Romans 8.

What are you filling your mind with? Ask yourself these questions.

- Are you feeding the idols in your heart?
- Are you setting your mind on Christ, in whom the Spirit delights?

- What is the Holy Spirit, who dwells within you, seeing through your eyes, hearing through your ears or touching through your hands?

Then seek the power of the Spirit to empower a different life.

We experience the everyday renewal of the Holy Spirit through setting our minds on the things the Spirit delights in and putting sin to death by the Spirit at work in us.