

LIVING IN THE SPIRIT

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Text: Romans 8:5-11

“No one imagined that Charles Dutton would have achieved anything, for he spent many years imprisoned for manslaughter. But when someone asked this now-successful Broadway star of *The Piano Lesson* how he managed to make such a remarkable transition, he replied, "Unlike the other prisoners, I never decorated my cell."

Dutton had resolved never to regard his cell as home. Christians, too, accomplish much in this world when they don't accommodate themselves to it.” (Larson, 280)

Just as Charles Dutton never regarded his cell as home, as Christians, we must be careful to remember that we are just passing through this world on our way home. Heaven is our home. We're looking "for a better country -- a heavenly one."

The secret to making this journey a successful one is to remember that we are to live by a higher standard. We are to keep our minds on the things that please God -- not what appeals to our natural desires. The crowds may be doing as they please but we are to do what pleases God.

In the previous verses, Paul has just made it clear that those "in Christ" are free from condemnation as they walk in the Spirit. In our text, he continues his thought by pointing out several *differences* between those who follow the flesh and those who follow after the Spirit.

I. THERE ARE DIFFERENCES IN THEIR WAY OF THINKING (v.5).

What we think about determines our spirituality.

A. Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh.

It should be understood that Paul is not comparing two kinds of Christians but rather is contrasting the unsaved with the saved. Notice he said to those who "live" according to the flesh, or according to the Spirit. The way one lives says more about a person than his words.

Vance Havner writes, "Sermons on worldliness are rare these days. The new word is 'secularism.' Billy Sunday used to say that the term 'worldly Christian' was a misnomer. Of course, Billy didn't put it that way. He said, 'You might as well talk about a heavenly devil!' That is in line with the New Testament definition that the friend of the world is the enemy of God.

"I am convinced that many people we call worldly Christians are not Christians at all. Our Savior said, 'My sheep hear my voice...and they follow me.' JN. 10:27) A sheep may fall into a mudhole but is not satisfied to stay there. A hog is at home in a mudhole, and Peter tells us that false teachers who revert to their evil ways belong in that category.

"It is true that we are not to judge people. 'The Lord knoweth them that are his' (2 Tim. 2:19), and I am glad that He does, otherwise some of them would be pretty hard to identify! That same verse goes on to declare that all who claim to be the Lord's should depart from iniquity...'Birds of a feather flock together,' and where we feel most at home is where we belong. 'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren' (John. 3:14)." (Havner, 288)

B. In contrast, those living "by" the Spirit keep their minds "on" the things of the Spirit.

- * They keep their minds on the kingdom of God, not on this world.
- * They are ambitious for the things of God, not of this world.

Phil. 4:8 gives us an example of spiritual thinking.

"Finally, my brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy -- meditate on these things."

II. THERE ARE DIFFERENCES IN THEIR WAY OF LIVING (v.6).

A. The carnal mind is compared to death.

They may be alive physically but they are dead spiritually.

B. The spiritual mind is compared to life and peace.

Jesus offers both, life and peace to those who are willing to walk in the Spirit.

III. THERE ARE DIFFERENCES IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD (vv.7-9).

A. The carnally minded are controlled by his or her desires.

The carnal (or natural) mind by its very nature is at odds with God. The carnal mind is all about "our will" not God's will. This is the reason it cannot subject to the law of God.

It's not that no one who is unconverted has a desire to live for God. The point is that it requires a new mind to live for God -- not a new attitude -- a new mind!

B. It is impossible to please God in the flesh or without being converted.

Why? First of all, we will always want to please ourselves first until we have a new mind.

Second, it's not just good deeds that please God but being conformed to the image of His Son.

C. Those who are spiritually minded are led by the Spirit.

1. It's just natural -- if the Spirit of God dwells in you, He will control you. This is not to say you will live a life of perfection and

never fail. There will always be the struggle to yield to the Spirit instead of the flesh.

But the key is that, in Christ, it will be your natural tendency to hold on to righteousness and shun evil.

2. If the Spirit dwells in you, you belong to God.

How do you know you are saved?

a.) By the Word of God, and

b.) By the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Rom. 8:16, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." You can know that you are saved!

When evangelist D. L. Moody described his conversion experience, he said: "I was in a new world. The next morning the sun shone brighter and the birds sang sweeter...the old elms waved their branches for joy, and all nature was at peace." (Wiersbe, 540)

IV. THERE ARE DIFFERENCES IN THEIR HOPE (vv.10-11).

A. There is no hope for the carnally minded.

Paul has already stated in v. 6, "to be carnally minded is death." This is spiritual and literal because the condition of the soul eventually affects the body.

B. Those who have the Spirit have hope.

Because our bodies are mortal, due to the fall of man, we may all die. However, the child of God has hope because of the Spirit. The Spirit reverses the consequences of sin!

C. Even if we die we have hope.

We are redeemed through Christ. * First, through His resurrection.

I Cor. 15:20-23, "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming."

Secondly, because God raised Christ from the dead by the Holy Spirit. Acts 13:33-35, "God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten you.' And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: 'I will give you the sure mercies of David.' Therefore He also says in another Psalm: 'You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.'"

Thirdly, we are promised that the Spirit that dwells in us is the same Spirit that raised Jesus and He will resurrect us as well.

I Cor. 5:1-5, "For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee."

CONCLUSION

In our day-to-day lives, we sometimes lose sight of our goals and our future. This is why walking in the Spirit is so important to us. Through the Spirit, we please God. Also, He reminds us that this world is not our home as well as reminding us of our future hope in Christ. How can we be what we need to be without the Spirit working freely in our lives?

Julian B. Robinson writes, "The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the common mark of all believers. It is the Shepherd's mark of the flock, distinguishing them from the rest of the world. It is the goldsmith's stamp on the genuine sons of God, separating them from the dross of false professors of the faith. It is the King's own seal on those who are His peculiar people, proving them to be His own property. The

indwelling Spirit of God brings life and peace which enables the believer to walk in newness of life." (White, 317)

Are you walking in the fullness of the Spirit? Are the differences between your life in God and the life of the carnal evident? Why not rededicate yourself anew to the purpose of walking in the power of the Spirit of the resurrection?

References

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