

GOD'S CALL

Major themes in the Scriptures

The Holy Spirit (2)

The Spirit of life

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The Lord willing, today we will consider the subject, “The Holy Spirit”, the second message, in seeking to appreciate major themes in the Scriptures.

A short summary of today's message:

A major problem in our spiritual journey is the presence of sin in our lives. This brings about spiritual death in our being and the judgment of God in our lives. The Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of life, enables us to overcome sin and live a life of true freedom in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We will seek the Lord to appreciate more of what this means.

When God created Man, His intention was for Man to become good and holy like Him, but He also knew that Man would go his own way and bring about sin, destruction, and evil, and grief to His heart. But God saw that it is possible for Man, in the midst of all the difficulties of life, to choose the path of life: It is possible for Man to know God and His goodness and to benefit from His grace. And so God took the path to create Man and in the midst of all that Man has done, God provided all that is necessary in order to help us in spite of our failures and our sins.

Sin brings about sadness, grief, pain and destruction in this world. Satan sinned because of his own personal, selfish desires and many have followed him in this path to varying degrees. All have sinned, but there are different degrees of sin, different depths of our rebellion against God.

At the heart of it, we know that sin has to do with selfishness, going our own way not because it is a good way, but going our own way because that is pleasant to us, that is enjoyable to us; it is what we prefer, what we like, not because it is good. On the other hand, we know that God is good and His ways are perfect and yet, we choose to go our own way because we do not want to submit to God's ways which, although they are good, they may be difficult, they may be painful, and we may need to go through hard times in the process of what God wants to do in our lives.

So in the Scriptures, we see God tells us that the path of sin leads to death. And this can take place in the physical realm; it can take place in the spiritual realm.

Right from the time in the Garden of Eden, we see God's judgment on sin when Adam and Eve rebelled against God.

They were dwelling in the Garden of Eden, which was very pleasant, beautiful, enjoyable, and in the physical realm, everything went well. But when Adam and Eve sinned, when they chose to go their own way instead of obeying God, they were chased out of the Garden of Eden. Thorns and thistles, pain and suffering became part of the world that we now live in as a result of that.

So we can say that physical suffering and pain and death arose from the context of the sin of Adam and Eve. But it does not mean that whenever there is pain and suffering and sorrow in this world in the physical realm, it is because we have sinned. This is now the world that we live in. There will be pain and suffering and sorrow from the events in this world.

But there is still a relationship in many instances between sin and physical suffering. It is not always true, but in many situations, much of our suffering may come about as a result of our rebellion against God and His ways and in various situations, they can be manifestations of God's judgment. So God's judgment can be manifested in the physical realm during our time on earth, but not always.

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

- 15 "See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity;
16 in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it.
17 "But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other Gods and serve them,
18 I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You will not prolong *your* days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it.
19 "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants,
20 by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

The context is Moses speaking to the nation of Israel before they crossed into the Promised Land, and it was God's message to the people of Israel as a nation.

These aspects are related to the physical realm: God told them if they would obey Him, then He would bless them in the land that they would enter into and in the physical realm, there would be abundance. God would provide for them. But if they were to rebel against Him, then there would come about physical pain and suffering. And here, Moses told them: "I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity".

That was the context in which God was dealing with the people of Israel. But it does not mean that today, any one of us who goes through adversity in life, it means we are rebelling against God and those who are prosperous, they are spiritual and God approves. That is not true.

It is a manifestation in which God specifically told them in that context, if they were to obey Him, this is what He would do; if they were to disobey, this is what He would do. So God may manifest His judgment in the physical realm and it may lead to physical death. They may not live long; they may be conquered; they may be exiled; they may die in the process.

Today, this principle is still true for Christians. It is not always applied, but it can also be true.

We all know of Ananias and Sapphira who lied to the Holy Spirit. They pretended; they were not truthful in what they did and said; and God judged them with physical death. They died.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians and he also referred to this aspect:

1 Corinthians 11: 26-32

- 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.
- 27 Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.
- 28 But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.
- 29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly.
- 30 For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.
- 31 But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.
- 32 But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.

The apostle Paul warned the Corinthian Christians and he told them: "...many of you are weak and sick, and a number sleep because of your sins". The word "sleep" here refers to physical death. Many among them were weak physically and sick physically, and a number of them had died.

In this context, he was referring to partaking of the Lord's Supper. If they were to do it frivolously, they did not do it in a spirit of worship, of love for the Lord, but with the wrong spirit towards God and towards others, then they would drink judgment to themselves, and this could result in physical weakness, sickness and death.

However, it is important for us to understand that the relationship between physical suffering and God's judgment is not always the same. God does not always judge us physically when we sin.

Many people have sinned like the Corinthians, many people have sinned like Ananias and Sapphira, but God has not taken away their lives physically. On the other hand, there are many people who are evil, cruel; they exploit others, but they may live in prosperity. God may allow that. However, ultimately, there will be a Day of Judgment when God will manifest His judgment in the physical realm as well as in the spiritual realm.

But why did God do that? Why did God deal with the people of Israel in that way? Why did God deal with Ananias and Sapphira and the Corinthians in that way?

Basically, it is because God is concerned about the spiritual, God is concerned about our heart. He is using the physical realm to help us understand, appreciate the importance of walking with God, of living our lives right, of choosing the right path.

But if we do not listen, He may not always continue in this way. He may allow us to degenerate in the midst of physical prosperity, in the midst of the many things that we may get from this world and we may think that we are doing well. But ultimately, God is looking at our heart.

So, we need to see that what is more important is that sin results in spiritual death. And this aspect is always true.

Sin does not always result in physical death, but sin will always result in spiritual death. And this is what God wants to emphasize to us. We may not realize it, we may not see it immediately but it is a spiritual principle, it is a spiritual reality.

So there are many people who look around and they say, "Why are the wicked so prosperous, they can enjoy themselves? Why do I suffer so much when I am seeking to follow God?" But they do not realize that that is not the primary issue.

Ultimately, those who are wicked, they will die and in the spiritual realm, they continue to die spiritually. Those who seek the Lord, they will live and will continue to grow. So there is a principle of death and a principle of life in the spiritual realm; and there are also different degrees of life, different degrees of death.

Ezekiel 18: 4

"Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die..."

Here, the Lord is concentrating on the spiritual realm, not on the physical body: the souls of men. The soul of the father as well as the soul of the son – they all belong to God. God is our Creator. We are not self-existent beings – we came into this world on our own – but we were created by God and we belong to Him by creation. And so He declares: "The soul who sins will die..." We will die in our soul when we sin. There will be spiritual death and this will always be true.

In the New Testament, we see the same principle emphasized. The apostle Paul wrote in **Romans 6: 23**:

Romans 6: 23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The wages of sin is death: always will be.

Whenever we sin, death will set in in the spiritual realm. Death is opposite to life.

Life in the context of the Scriptures in the spiritual realm refers to moral and spiritual life of goodness, of purity, the character of God, the being of God manifested in perfect moral and spiritual life.

Death is the opposite of that. When we sin against God, death sets in; we become more and more negative, more and more opposite to God.

And so we see Satan chose to rebel against God and there is death in him in a very intense form. Wherever he goes, he brings death. Whoever follows him will die.

This is true of our lives also. If we live our lives in accordance with God's ways, then the life of God comes into us; we will also impart life to other people, we will influence others in the direction of spiritual life. If we go our own way, death sets in; we will also influence others in the direction of death.

For the Christian who has experienced life, who has tasted of the life of God, who has partaken of the life of God, there can still be death present. And this is something we need to recognize, so that we do not take it lightly.

A Christian, although born of the Spirit, can influence others negatively if his attitude, his spirit, is negative. There can be death being imparted through a Christian. But if a Christian lives his life in accordance with God's ways and with the life of God, then he would influence others in the direction of spiritual life.

The apostle Paul expressed this clearly to help us understand the principle of life and death, so that we may be careful to live our lives as we should.

Romans 7: 21-25

- 21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.
- 22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,
- 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.
- 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?
- 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

The principles of life and death, of sin and righteousness operate within the believer. If our lives are not fully transformed in the direction of God's heart and God's ways and we are one with Him, then this conflict will always be present.

“I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.” This is a description of someone who has experienced God’s forgiveness, who has come to appreciate the law of God and wants to walk in that way. **Romans 5** tells us how we are reconciled to God through the death of his Son. **Romans 6** tells us how we should offer ourselves to God to live for Him. And **Romans 7** tells us a struggle in seeking to live a life of righteousness and yet failing: the law of sin and the law of death. Not wanting to sin and yet sinning again and again: the law of sin. Sin leading to death, conflict with God, not walking in God’s ways: the law of death.

“Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death [or from this body of death]?” – This body that brings about death because this is a body of sin, a body that encourages us in the direction of sin, has inclinations in the direction of sin. This body has many inclinations that can easily lead us in the direction of sin. It is not that all the inclinations in the body will do that; there are various aspects in the body that are neutral and they are proper. But there are various inclinations which, if we give in to them, will lead to sin.

So he says: “Who will set me free from the body of this death?” And then he says, “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” So the answer to this problem is through the Lord Jesus Christ. And so he says, “So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.”

So in his spirit, he could recognize what was the right path; he longed for it, but he had not yet learned to live by the power of God such that he would be able to overcome the inclinations and desires of the flesh. So if he were to give in to the flesh, he said, “with my flesh”, he would be serving the law of sin.

This is a very difficult situation and Christians struggle with this again and again through life. It is something that those who love the Lord would want to find an answer to.

God has provided the answer through the Lord Jesus Christ. God saves us from spiritual death through the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 3: 13-17

- 13 "No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.
- 14 "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;
- 15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.
- 16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.
- 17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

So God has taken the step to save us, to help us, so that we would not perish. And here, "perish" has to do with the spiritual realm, that our soul will die forever; we will no longer be able to be with God and to partake of His life. So, God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son. The solution is in the Lord Jesus Christ and God gave Him to us so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. This eternal life is in the spiritual realm; it is the life of God, and that life comes to us in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that we might be saved.

So what the Lord Jesus has done for us is first to save us from the judgment of sin in the sense of God's condemnation.

But the Lord Jesus also saves us from the condemnation of a life of sin in our own being. He delivers us from the life of sin so that we can live a life of righteousness.

And the Lord Jesus explained to the Jews that He is the bread of life.

John 6: 30-33

- 30 So they said to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform?"
- 31 "Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.'"
- 32 Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven.
- 33 "For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world."

So the Lord Jesus is the bread from heaven; He gives life to the world. He is the bread of life and He has come not just to bring forgiveness, but also to give us spiritual life – abundant life. So God's answer, God's provision is through the Lord Jesus Christ, the bread of life. We must partake of Him. In that state, we can find forgiveness, we can find spiritual life.

If that is so, then why are we talking about the Holy Spirit? Is not everything provided for? God has provided us the Lord Jesus Christ dying on the cross so that when we come to Him, we can be forgiven, we can partake of His life?

The Scriptures help us to understand that God's provision is in the Lord Jesus Christ: We must come to Him for forgiveness; He is our sacrifice; He is our perfect Example; in Him we see what we ought to be; through Him we find forgiveness.

But this life comes to us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

It is the Holy Spirit that brings about the life transformation in us. It is the Holy Spirit that helps us to be born again. It is the Holy Spirit that brings us out of death into life.

We are born again of the Spirit. But God does not want us just to be born of the Spirit.

He wants us to partake of the Spirit, to drink of the Spirit, to have abundant life in the Spirit. The Lord Jesus referred to that as rivers of living water – the Holy Spirit so abundant in us it is like rivers of living water flowing out from our inner man.

Romans 8: 1-4

- 1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
- 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.
- 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,
- 4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Romans 7 tells us the life of condemnation not in the sense of God's judgment, His sentence of death, but the condemnation of a life of unrighteousness – “Wretched man that I am!” The person who wants to be righteous, who wants to be good, he feels very condemned because his life is not good. His own heart condemns him; his life is not what it ought to be. He wants to be but he is not. He is condemned.

But **Romans 8: 1** tells us: “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.” So here, he is addressing the issue of the law of sin and of death, and being set free from that law. That is a reference to Christian living: living a life of victory, a life of righteousness, a life of freedom from sin and death.

There is a law that can set us free from this other law.

If we live by our own natural abilities, if we live by our own wisdom, if we live according to our own ideas, we will be living in accordance with the law of sin and of death. We may want to be good, we may want to do what is good, but we will fail again and again.

So the only way, by which we can overcome, we can be free from the law of sin and of death, is to abide in the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. If we abide in the law of the Spirit of life, we will be walking in life, we will be walking with God and we will find the freedom because the life of God, the power of God is not subject to sin, it does not lead to sin.

When we walk with God, when we live by the power of God, there is the life of righteousness and we will be set free from the law of sin and of death. This comes to us through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why the apostle Paul mentioned: "Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" It is through Jesus Christ our Lord.

So the freedom from that condemnation of a life of sin comes through the Lord Jesus Christ, but it is imparted to us through the Holy Spirit. It is God's provision for us and as we learn to walk by the Spirit, we will find that freedom.

So **verse 3** explains what God has done: For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.

So God's provision is through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is through the Lord Jesus Christ that sin was condemned in the flesh, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ as the perfect Man overcame sin in the flesh.

He lived in a body like ours, a body with all its inclinations that can easily lead to sin and yet, He never sinned. He condemned sin in the flesh. He shows to us that while dwelling in this flesh, in this sinful flesh, we can live a life of righteousness. We can overcome sin in the midst of such a context.

What the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh – the law cannot bring about righteousness in us. The law tells us: “You must be holy.” We try to be holy, but as we exercise ourselves in the flesh, depending on what we can on our own, we find that we will fail. We are weak in the flesh, we cannot overcome. There is no life and power in us.

The Lord Jesus told the Jews: “You have no life in yourselves.” In the flesh, in what you are on your own, you have no spiritual life. You must partake of the life of God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin [or concerning sin], He condemned sin in the flesh. The word “likeness” here, “likeness of sinful flesh” basically can mean it is similar, it is the same thing. He came to dwell in a body like ours. His body was basically similar to ours. He experienced all these things that we experience. **Hebrews** explains more with regard to this. He went through the temptations that we do, He went through the difficulties that we do, and in the midst of all that, He never sinned.

Then the apostle Paul says that God having done all this is to lead to **verse 4**: so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us... So, the requirement of the Law can be fulfilled in us – but not through the flesh.

The flesh is weak; it cannot fulfil the requirement of the Law.

But the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit: When we walk according to the Spirit, we will fulfil the requirement of the Law because the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of righteousness.

When we walk in accordance with the Spirit, we will be living a life of righteousness.

The word “walk” here in **verse 4** basically refers to “walking about” or “walking in companionship” or “following”. So either you follow the path of the flesh or you follow the Holy Spirit. When you follow the Holy Spirit, it means that you walk with Him: As He guides you, He leads you, you move together with Him and as you trust Him, He enables you in living that way.

So the life and the power comes from the Holy Spirit, but the basis comes from the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is the basis upon which we will partake of the life of God. The Holy Spirit is the One who brings the life of God to us; that is why He is called the Spirit of God; He is also called the Spirit of Christ.

It is important for us to recognize that the apostle Paul said “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”. Sometimes, people are so impressed with the Holy Spirit and the works that He does, the miracles and various experiences they have in the realm of the Spirit, that they concentrate on the Holy Spirit. But God’s intention is for us to concentrate on the Lord Jesus Christ and on God, who has given us His Son. God has given us His Son. We focus on Him and what He has provided for us in the Lord Jesus Christ, but we need to look to the Holy Spirit to enable us, to empower us, to guide us. We ask Him to teach us, to strengthen us, but it is in Christ Jesus.

Why is that so important? It is because one of the main reasons, as far as I can see, is that if we concentrate on the Holy Spirit, it is very easy for us to be led astray. The evil spirit is also a spirit and we may experience emotions, all kinds of experiences that may seem to be good and spiritual, but they are not from God. Or, even if they are from God, we may be concentrating on the experience rather than on the meaning and the direction, the path.

When we concentrate on the Lord Jesus Christ, we concentrate on His character, His life; we see how He lived His life in this world. God has revealed Himself to us through the Lord Jesus Christ living in the flesh for us to see. We are to live like Him. He is our Example; we should walk in His steps. That is the way we ought to live our lives. So as we look at the Lord Jesus, as we observe His life, as we ponder over the meaning within His heart, His motives, His approach, His values, His conduct, we understand how we ought to live our lives.

And so, as we look to the Holy Spirit, we are in reality asking the Holy Spirit to enable us to live like the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why when we live properly, Christ will be formed in us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord Jesus said the Holy Spirit would come to glorify Him. He will take of the things of the Lord Jesus Christ and show to us. He comes to help us to know the Lord Jesus Christ and to live like Him.

In the physical realm, the Holy Spirit also enables us in our physical mortal body to live as we should: He gives life to our physical mortal body.

Romans 8: 9-14

- 9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.
- 10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.
- 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.
- 12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh--
- 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.
- 14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

So the apostle Paul tells us that when we truly become a child of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit dwells in us. The Spirit of God dwells in us. He then says: "If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness."

He has said earlier on, this body is a body of sin, a body of death: We depend on this natural body, we will sin. It is a body of sin. But the spirit is alive because of righteousness. When we respond to God, when we come to Him to seek His forgiveness, we want to change our way of life, we will find life, there is spiritual life. The spirit is alive because of righteousness.

But the body is still dead. This body, if we just depend on that body to do the will of God, we will fail. We use our natural abilities, natural wisdom, natural talents to serve God, we will fail. We will be communicating the flesh.

So, **verse 11** tells us: But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

So the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is the Spirit of God. He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead is God. He will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. That is, the Holy Spirit will give life to your mortal body. He dwells in you; He will give life to your mortal body. What does this mean?

Here, the apostle Paul tells us this body that we have will lead us to sin if we just depend on that on our own. We must live by the power of God; we must live by the enabling of the Holy Spirit. So we need the Holy Spirit to give life to this mortal body.

That is to say, whatever you do as you live in this world, there should be this spirit of dependence on God, this spirit of looking to Him, trusting Him, looking to His enabling in all the things that we do.

We may think we know how to do, but if you are to do it on your own, that would be life in the flesh. There will not be spiritual life transmitted. But if you live a life in the things that you do in a spirit of looking to God, His Spirit enabling you, you will transmit spiritual life through your mortal body in the way you speak, in the way your behave, in the things that you do. There will be spiritual life being transmitted.

And this is a very, very important principle. It may not be obvious to us because there are many things we think we know how to do; we do not need to depend on God. But the apostle Paul says: "...pray without ceasing." And one of the aspects about this principle of "pray without ceasing" is the aspect of dependence on God, fellowship with Him, looking to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, depending on Him, walking with Him.

If we do not do that, we can do many clever things even in the spiritual realm, we may say many things that seem right, but there will not be that spiritual life, the spiritual power, the spiritual character of God being transmitted.

So this aspect is very important, that the Holy Spirit affects our body, enables this body to do the things that it should do and it can include at times, situations where you are physically exhausted, tired, and you find that you cannot do the things you ought to do. Yet, the Holy Spirit can energize you, enable you, to fulfil what God wants you to do.

Well, in the Old Testament, we know of Samson who had so much strength because the Holy Spirit enabled him in his body.

But that is not so very important. What is more important is that we depend on the Holy Spirit to manifest the moral and spiritual character of God, to transmit the life of God. But the Holy Spirit can enable us in the physical realm to do many things that at the natural plane we may not be able to do.

And so he says: "So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—": We should not continue in our natural ways. "...for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die": because that is still the self-life. Even though you may want to serve God, if you are doing it in the flesh, it will still be in the direction of disobedience, in the direction of independence from God.

We need to recognize our need of God and depend on Him in all the things that we do.

"...if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body [or the practices of the body], you will live". So we have to live by the power of the Spirit and we will then put to death the practices of the body.

These are practices; that means our natural frequent regular way of life; we tend to live like this. We must put that to death. Now, we live in the consciousness of God, we live by the guidance of the Spirit, we do the things that are truly meaningful to God.

"For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." That is, all who are being led by the Spirit of God – we look to Him for guidance, we trust Him, we depend on Him – then we are sons of God.

Here, the apostle Paul is not saying that if you do not depend on the Holy Spirit, then you are not a son of God. What he means is that this is what sons of God ought to be, these are truly sons of God; you are living according to that, how you should live. If you are led by the Spirit of God, you are truly a son of God.

All that we have said is such a wonderful thing: What God has provided – how we can live a life of victory, freedom, meaning, power. It is true God has made all these provisions and we can live like that.

But there is a very important condition and this condition is often not fulfilled, and that is why the life in the Spirit is not real or not sufficiently abundant. The Scriptures are very clear we must fulfil this condition if we want to experience, we want to know, this life in the Spirit.

And this condition is true repentance and faith, and this can be in ever deepening measure.

Are we truly repentant in that we are prepared to give up every aspect of self-life, we are prepared to give up everything contrary to the will of God, whatever we know that is not pleasing to God, we are prepared to give up, to discard, to reject? And we are prepared to follow the Lord in His ways and trust Him to enable us to walk in that path? This is the condition. Without this, all that God has provided for us will not be real in us; it will not transform our lives.

So God says this in **Ezekiel 18: 31-32**:

Ezekiel 18: 31-32

- 31 "Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel?
32 "For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies," declares the Lord GOD.
"Therefore, repent and live."

God says very clearly: "Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed". We must take that step, we must give up, we must throw away, we have to discard all that is wrong, negative, displeasing to God, all the ways of the world, all the selfish desires of our hearts. And He says: "...make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit!"

Usually, we say, "God gives me a new heart; God gives me a new spirit" and that is true. God is the One who works in us to bring this about.

But God cannot bring that about unless you choose it. So in reality you are the one who must make yourself a new heart. You must make yourself a new spirit. It is your choice. You will live this way. You will discard the old ways, you choose what is good. You make yourself a new heart, a new spirit, but you have to do it in a spirit of dependence on God, coming to Him, that the Holy Spirit will enable you to be what you ought to be.

So it is you and God together.

So the choice is yours. You must decide you want a new heart, a new spirit. You must come to God and look to Him, that He will bring it about.

So He says: "I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies". God does not take pleasure in our spiritual death; He does not want it. But if we do not repent, then God has no choice but to condemn us.

So He says: "Therefore, repent and live." Which means: If you do not repent, you will die. If you repent, you will live.

So this principle is always true for all mankind.

As you have seen in the physical realm, it may not always be true that if we follow God, physically everything will go on well – may or may not be.

But in terms of the meaning, God will lead us through, enable us to live meaningfully; He will give life to our mortal bodies so that whatever state we are in, we can express the life of God. But this principle that we must choose to repent and to walk in the path of righteousness, it is true for all mankind. If we do not, we will perish.

Galatians 6: 7-8

- 7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.
- 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

So this will always be true: Whatever a man sows, he will reap. God has determined that it will be so and in the moral and spiritual realm, in its meaning, it is always true. The moral direction of our lives, the moral character that we develop is the result of what we sow, how we live, how we choose.

So then he elaborates: “...the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption”: sin and death, if we walk in the flesh.

“...but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life”. He is the Spirit of life: spiritual life and meaning. So if we walk by the Spirit, we sow to the Spirit, we live according to the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, we will reap eternal life. He will impart life to us more and more.

Finally, I want to emphasize that this whole way of life is not just a general attitude that we take, a general direction of life that we hold, but it involves every moment of our lives, every step that we take. It must affect us in every situation of our lives.

We must take each step in accordance with the guidance and enabling of the Holy Spirit. We must walk by the Spirit and keep in step with the Holy Spirit in each situation that He leads us through.

Galatians 5: 16-26

- 16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.
- 17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.
- 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.
- 19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,
- 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,
- 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.
- 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
- 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.
- 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.
- 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.
- 26 Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

I do not intend to go through this whole passage, but to bring across some major aspects in relation to what we are considering at the moment.

“Walk by the Spirit”: Here, we see this phrase “walk by the Spirit” in **verse 16** and also in **verse 25**, but from what I can understand, the word that is used is different. In **verse 16**, the word translated as “walk” refers to “walking about” or “following as a companion”. That is, we follow the Holy Spirit as He leads and we walk as we live our lives together with Him. In **verse 25**, the word that is translated as “walk” refers to “marching in rank” or “keeping in step”. So when people march, they must keep the timing, they move together. So they march in rank or keep in step.

And I see that both of these aspects are very important.

If we want to learn to walk by the Spirit, then we must appreciate the importance of listening to the Holy Spirit, walking together with Him, accompanying Him, following Him, following His teaching, His guidance. We walk together with Him.

At the same time, we must be conscious that we march in rank, that is, we keep to the timing, we walk, keep in step, with Him. We do not lag behind, we do not move forward. We are conscious that we need Him, we depend on Him. So the things that we do, we are not hasty, we just rush ahead because something impresses us. Neither do we hesitate when we are clear it is what God wants us to do. We keep in step.

And the more we learn to pray without ceasing, the more we will understand what this means: to walk by the Spirit.

So the apostle Paul says: "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit". The word translated as "by" can also be translated as "in". We can say "If we live in the Spirit" or "we live by the Spirit"; "let us also walk in the Spirit" or "walk by the Spirit"

But the meaning basically here is, as I see, has to do with, these two aspects. If we live in the realm of the Holy Spirit, let us learn to walk by the Spirit every step that we take.

We need to learn to live in the realm of the Spirit. That is our whole life, the direction of our lives. We should be conscious that we are not living in the realm of the world and its system. We are living in the realm of the Holy Spirit and His guidance, according to God's instructions and God's ways, according to what we see in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the realm in which we live.

Then let us also walk by the Spirit, keep in step with Him, each moment of our lives, everything that we do, pray without ceasing, understand His will, walk with Him.

In the Scriptures in the Old Testament, there is also a verse that helps us appreciate these two aspects. And it says: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path".

The word of God, what God has taught us and shown to us should be a light to our path: shows us the whole direction of our lives, how we should live - where is our goal, our direction, our values. It should set our heart in that direction. We walk by the light of God. The word of God is a light to our path.

But the word of God is also a lamp to our feet. That is to say, it shows us every step that we should take. We may see the whole direction in front of us, but there could be a pothole in front of us and we may just fall into it. So we need also to be aware of what is around us, the immediate. Every step that we take, do so carefully, prayerfully, in a spirit of dependence on the Holy Spirit.

So today, I have sought basically to concentrate on this area of how sin is such a problem in our lives, but God has made provision for us through the Lord Jesus Christ to give us the basis upon which we can find forgiveness as well as the basis to have the life and power to overcome sin. And this comes to us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

But we must constantly look at the Lord Jesus as our Example, we must read the Scriptures to appreciate how He lived His life, and we ask the Holy Spirit to teach us how to live like that.

So if we want to live our lives well and fulfil God's call in our lives, we must turn away from our self-centred way of life and come to God for His forgiveness through what the Lord Jesus has done for us, and live by the power of the Holy Spirit in accordance with God's ways.

Let us, as we come before the Lord, ask Him to help us understand what this means in our own personal lives, how we can benefit from all that God has provided for us, that His grace will not be bestowed on us in vain, but we will labour hard in the direction of His calling, that we will walk with Him and live for Him.