

The Pilgrimage To A Spirit-Led Life

Part Eighteen

Last time we focused on the statement that God through the sacrifice of Jesus “*put away sin*” and that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who don’t walk according to the flesh but are led by the spirit.

We then analysed what was the “*requirement*” of the law and saw it could be summed up in one word – love.

1 John 4:7-8 [NIV] “*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*”

We saw that this love was

- a) supernatural, only available from God;
- b) originates through the new birth;
- c) worked out by a life of progressive obedience to Christ’s words;
- d) we **don’t** start perfect in love but as we are led by Holy Spirit the Love of God in us matures;
- e) love is the evidence of our being born again

Paul now concentrates on the contrast and opposition between the “*sinful nature*” our rebellious human nature and the Spirit.

What we are seeing in this study is our “*legal inheritance*”.

Some Christians feel the “*got it all*” when they were born again and received God’s Holy Spirit.

We may ask of the people who say this, if you’ve got it all then where is it?

Let’s see it.

There is a vast difference between having something legally and having it experientially.

The maturing of a Christian life is the moving from the legal to the experiential.

The difference can be illustrated by our forefathers and their entry into the promised land of Canaan.

Joshua 1:2-3 God said to Joshua “*I am giving them the land*”.

From this point onwards legally the whole land of Canaan belonged to Israel; but experientially they did not have one inch of it.

God brought Israel into the Promised Land by supernatural events; the crossing of the Jordan and the destruction of Jericho; but from that point onwards they had to fight for everything they took, and if they didn’t fight they didn’t get it.

The same is true in the Christian life; it takes a lot of determination, faith and patience to move from what is ours legally to what is experientially ours.

Understanding now what is available to us, which I hope all of us do now understand, is only the **first step** to having it experientially.

Romans 8:5 [NIV] *“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.”*

Those who are *“operating in the realm of the flesh”* only set their minds on physical things. This describes the vast majority of mankind.

We need to be *“operating in the realm of the spirit”* to have true life.

Romans 8:6 [NIV] *“The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;”*

Note: The different end of two differing ways of life.

The difference is **not** external, it is internal, in the mind, the way we think.

When God really starts to change us he **doesn't start** from the outside.

Religion starts from the outside, change clothes, stop smoking, limit intake of alcohol, change our eating habits, change length of hair, take off make-up, etc., etc.

God's conversion starts in the mind and it takes a period of time before this can be seen on the outside, by our changed external appearance.

To only change the external things in our lives doesn't produce anything of lasting value.

If we don't have peace of mind we have **not** yet moved into our inheritance, nor are we then experiencing life.

The life referred to is **not** just a *“chemical existence”* that all living things have.

The Greek word translated life is *“zōē”*, is life as God has life, in its absolute sense.

Ephesians 4:17-19 [NIV] *“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. **They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God** because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.”*

John 10:10 [NIV] *“... I [Jesus Christ] have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*

We only become partakers of this life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 3:15 [NIV] *“that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”*

We receive this life when we trust in what Jesus did for us on the cross.

Leviticus 17:11 [NIV] *“For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.”*

The life of the physical body is in the blood but the life mentioned in these scriptures is in the Spirit.

Note: The reason for this “*darkened understanding*” is “*hardness [margin] of their heart*”, **not** yielding to God like pliable clay in the hand of the master potter.

Greek “*porosis*” callousness, metaphorical of a dulled spiritual perception.

Romans 8:7 [NIV] “*the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.*”

We have inside us an enemy of God – a nature that does **not** submit itself to God, a rebel.

James 4:4 [NIV] “*You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred towards God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*”

Our natural mind will side with and has been educated by a system that is the enemy of God.

This is why God has to start conversion, with the re-educating of our minds.

Remember that Paul considered all he had received before his dramatic meeting with Christ as “*rubbish*”.

Philippians 3:7-8 [NIV] “*But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ*”

Not even God will try to change this rebel that is inside us.

He just puts it to death.

Romans 8:8 [NIV] “*Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.*”

As long as we are operating in our own natural ability we cannot please God.

Even though we may be very religious, very zealous, as we have just read Paul was before meeting with Christ.

Ephesians 2:1-3 [NIV] “*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.*”

Not just in the sinful nature but in the mind we followed the way of this world, this society.

Colossians 1:21 [NIV] “*Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour.*”

Enemies of God in our mind.

True conversion demands a total change of mind.

The proper scriptural word for this is “*repentance*” – Greek “*metanoia*” – to think differently, re-consider, feel compunction, reversal of decision.

The parable of the Prodigal Son is an outstanding illustration of this change of mind.

Matthew 4:17 [NIV] “*From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”*”

Christ began his ministry with a call to repent not addressed to a nation as in the Old Covenant but to the individual.

The New Covenant is a one-to-one with God.

This is **not** just an emotional experience, it is a change of the will and the mind.

Isaiah 55:7 [NIV] *“Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.”*

Forsake our **thoughts** and turn [Hebrew word for repentance] to God who is waiting to have compassion towards us.

Romans 12:2 [NIV] *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

Renewing of our mind.

Greek “*anakainizo*” to make new, **the whole course of life flows in a different direction.**

2 Corinthians 4:16 [NIV] *“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”*

A continual day by day process.

Colossians 3:10 [NIV] *“and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”*

As new knowledge of Christ is made available to us, as a born again child of God.

Ephesians 4:22-23 [NIV] *“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; **to be made new in the attitude of your minds;**”*

A new attitude of mind.

“Attitude” Greek “*pneuma*” mental disposition – principles.

This word is used in New Testament as:-

- a) **Character** – as being in itself invisible, and manifested only in actions
- b) **Other invisible characteristics** – such as feelings or desires or supernatural gifts
- c) **The whole person** – **Luke 1:47** translated “**spirit**” but indicating whole person

How does this change of mind take place?

Romans 8:9 [NIV] *“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.”*

By the Spirit of God that dwells in us.

“Lives in” – Greek “*oikeo*” to occupy, remain, inhabit, implying **every part** of us.

Not a limited area.

Only when the new Holy Spirit led mind governs every aspect of our lives can we truly say we are Christians.

How will we recognise this change in ourselves?

By the fruits of our lives, if we are still producing the fruits of bitterness, unfaithfulness, criticism, envy, discord, selfishness, etc.

These are **not** the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

The potential is there **if** we allow the Holy Spirit to control **every aspect** of our lives.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 [NIV] *“Do not put out the Spirit’s fire;”*

Ephesians 4:30 [NIV] *“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”*

1 Timothy 4:14 [NIV] *“Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.”*

Romans 8:10 [NIV] *“But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.”*

If we have truly received and yielded to Christ then the body of sin [the old man] is dead; our will and desires are dead; and the Holy Spirit is life in us because of righteousness [*“dikaios”* – imputed or credited] in us.

Philippians 2:12 [NIV] *“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, **continue to work out your salvation** with fear and trembling,”*

This is the potential, a new life in us that has yet to be worked out [Greek *“dikaioma”*] in acts of righteousness.

Revelation 19:7-8 [NIV] *“Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the **righteous acts** of the saints.)”*

Same Greek word *“dikaioma”*.

The old corrupt, fleshly humanity in us cannot be reversed, any more than the corruption we see all around in us in God’s physical creation.

An apple that is left to itself gradually becomes rotten and nothing will make it fresh again.

Put the apple in a refrigerator and the corruption will be slowed down but what is in-built in the apple will continue to cause it to corrupt.

Religion is like a refrigerator, it slows down the corruption in a person but they are still corrupting.

The only solution is a new birth, new creation.

What Paul is explaining in **1 Corinthians 15:34-58** is dual.

It can illustrate our ultimate resurrection at the return of Christ; but also the resurrection of our new man after dying with Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:34 [King James] *“Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.”*

Awake to righteousness [“*dikaisos*” – imputed righteousness].

Wake up to the powerful potential that dwells in us.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 [NIV] *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

We are a new creation that is all of God, nothing we can do ourselves.

But as a result of what God has done we are given a job to do, that of serving in His reconciliation of all mankind to God, Ambassadors of Christ, to become the righteousness of God.

“*Righteousness*” [“*dikaiosune*” from “*dikaios*” imputed righteousness]

The very attributes of God being shown in us, the same love, faithfulness, truthfulness, etc.

That demonstrates the quality of God’s Holiness.

This righteousness is **unattainable** by obedience to any law, or by any merit of our own, or any other condition than that of faith in Jesus the Christ.

The man who trusts [has faith in] Jesus Christ becomes “*the righteousness of God in him*”.

We become in Jesus Christ all that God requires in a person to be, all that we can **never** become of ourselves.

This vital union we have with God in Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, inevitably produces righteousness of life, that is in conformity to the Will of God.

Romans 12:2 [NIV] *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

“*transformed*” – Greek “*metamorphoo*” changed – transformed.

The English word that is based on this Greek word is “*metamorphosis*” which describes the transformation of the pupa into a winged insect, the rather ugly pupa into a beautiful butterfly.

When we come to realise the potential we have in this new birth we cannot but become excited and enthusiastic about it.

Romans 8:11 [NIV] *“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.”*

This is the basis for any kind of physical, as well as spiritual, healing.

We need to live as servants and ambassadors of Christ.

Romans 8:12-13 [NIV] *“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,”*

Therefore, because of what has just been explained, we are under an obligation of love to respond by putting to death the deeds of our human nature.

How is most of our time spent?

In front of the television or in front of God’s Word?

Is most of our conversation about physical worldly things or about the things of God?

Are we nurturing the human nature in us that is corrupt and is dying?

Romans 8:14 [NIV] *“because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”*

This is the alternative way of life, to life, by being led by Spirit of God.

The Father, Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit are persons [of God] and if we are to be led by them we have to develop a relationship with them; the close father/son relationship or the husband/wife relationship.

These physical relationships illustrate the relationship God wants to have with us, through the Holy Spirit in us.

Since the return of Jesus Christ to the Throne of God, it is the Holy Spirit through whom God works, here on earth.