



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 8:5-17

"Life by the Spirit - Part I"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Now, this morning we are turning to Romans chapter 8, and reading for our Scripture reading, verse 5 through verse 17. In the meeting at 8:30, I was unable to finish this section, but I want to read through the entire section anyway, and probably in this hour we will cover only about half of the material, and save the rest for next Sunday, the Lord willing. Romans chapter 8 and verse 5.

Now the apostle has been speaking in the 7th chapter of the conflict that is existent in every believer's life. He has said that it is impossible for us to win the victory in our own strength. In fact, he concluded by saying, "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The apostle realized that deliverance would have to come from a person, and not from some principle or thing, and in the 8th chapter he unfolds the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who is the person who makes it possible for the believer to be delivered from the body of this death. So that Romans chapter 8 verse 1 through verse 11, and particularly verse 11, is Paul's climatic answer to the question, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

Now, he has said that in the first few verses of the 8th chapter that we have freedom by virtue of our relationship to the Lord Jesus. There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. And he has grounded that freedom in the

law of the spirit of life, that is that spirit who lives in the heart of every believer, and who works according to the regularity of a law, and that in turn, that union, with the Holy Spirit and that relationship to his delivering activity is grounded in the atonement for what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh condemned sin in the flesh, that is he a gained judgment against sin in the flesh, and the purpose of it, is that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who want not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. So picking it up here now the apostle will speak about reasons believers walk by the Spirit. He will discourse briefly on the believer's life and hope, and then he will speak in the latter part of our section of the believer's obligation to the Holy Spirit in his new life. So we pick it up at verse 5,

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; (Or literally for the mind of the flesh is death.) but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body indeed because of sin; (That's a natural relationship we have. Our body is dying because of sin, and will ultimately be placed in the grave, if the Lord Jesus does not come before we die. So he says,) the body indeed is dead on account of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

Now, you know from listening a number of times here that in the original text capitals were not used in the earliest Greek manuscripts, and so when you come to a word like spirit for example, which may refer to the Holy Spirit or the human spirit or even a disposition as it does in this chapter also, one must look at the context in order to translate properly. Now in this case, I think that the Authorized Versions, and most of the

commentators, I think agree, have made a mistake. They have rendered that word in verse 10 the word for spirit as a reference to the Holy Spirit in the Authorized Version text. It's capitalized, "Spirit". It should not be capitalized. It should be lower case s because the reference is to the human spirit. That's evident from the contrast with the body, so we should read then verse 10,

"And if Christ be in you the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit our human spirit, since we have been born again regenerated is life on account of imputed righteousness, But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. (That is the final deliverance to which we look forward the resurrection of the body.) Therefore, (Paul writes in verse 12,) brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

May God bless this reading from his word. It's probably fair to say that all genuine Christians have an interest in living the Christian life. Unfortunately to many of us, it is not clear exactly how this is to be done. As a result of this, different answers have been given. Some for example, have suggested that the answer to living the Christian life is legalism that is by the erection of certain taboos and adherence to them. It is thought the sanctification will ensue as a merited result. The Bible however, presents the Christian life as a life of faith, and faith as we know, is contrary to the principle of works. The

Bible for example says, "The just shall live by faith." And then applies that great text, not only to the principle of justification, by which we come to the possession of righteousness, but also applies it to the method by which we live the Christian life.

Paul in Galatians chapter 2 says, "I have been crucified together with Christ, and I no longer live, and the life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself, for me." And so the apostle thinks of the Christian life as a life of trust. Holiness is not something that we earn, but holiness is a gift. The apostle also in one of his epistles in the first chapter says, "Being confinement of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ." So that the work that he brings in justification is performed in sanctification or in the Christian life. In that same epistle he says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, but lest you think that your salvation is really a work." He adds, "For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." So that the Christian life is a life of faith, and it is a life that is given by God just as our justification is given by God.

Legalism therefore or the idea that we may have certain taboos, which we erect not necessarily taught in the Bible live up to them, and then earn merit, by which we please God is contrary to the essence of holy Scripture. On the other hand, and to the other extreme, some have suggested that the way that we live the Christian life, because we are free from the law is pretty much as we please.

Now, the apostle in his day had those, who evidentially were in danger of doing that because he warns against that. He taught very plainly that we were not under that Law of Moses as a code, but that was mistaken by some evidently, to think that since we are not under the Law of Moses as a code, we can't live pretty much as we please, so he warned them in the Epistle to the Galatians in this way. He says, "For brethren ye have been called unto liberty, only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." So the other extreme of license is also contrary to the spirit of the

Bible. The apostle in Romans chapter 8 presents us with the third alternative, and he does it not only here, but in other epistles such as that same Epistle to the Galatians. So here he tells us, and this is the topic for the sermon, how we are to live the Christian life, Life by the Spirit. This is the third alternative. A life guided and directed by the Holy Spirit, which lifts the believer above the bitter and exhausting life of the Christian masses. What a wonderful experience life under the leadership of the Holy Spirit turn out to be.

I've often used this illustration. You'll pardon me if I use it again, but I think it fits here. It was a privilege of mine to live in Europe for a time, and in Great Britain particularly. And one of the things that I noticed over there was the fact that the British have a consuming passion for animals, and particularly dogs. Everybody has a Fred Basset over there it seems although it may not be a basset hound, but the same attitude toward dogs, represented by that cartoon strip is found in Britain. And as I've mentioned to you before, when I was over there, a Frenchman I think said, it was reported in the paper that if dogs had a pope the Vatican would be in London because so many dogs are in Britain.

Now, there are several kinds of dogs, and all who know dogs can recognize these classes. There is the dog that has law but no liberty. This is the dog that comes out with its master in order to have its evening walk, but he comes out under chain. He cannot go wherever he wishes to go, but he is bound by a chain fastened around his collar, his neck, to his master. Whenever anything is attractive to this dog, he seeks to go toward it. If there is another dog that comes by and they want to have a little dog fellowship, and he seeks to go, but there is that inevitable chain, and consequently he cannot do it.

This morning as I left after the 8:30 service, having said this, I started down Churchill Way towards Preston Road, and there was a man jogging, and he was jogging with his dog, but his not free. He was jogging with the dog on a chain, and the poor dog with his tongue hanging out of his mouth was following his master because he had to. So that is a dog that lives by the law but has no liberty. There is another kind of dog. There

is the dog that has liberty but no law. One might think this is the way for dogs to live. I can imagine that if one of them saw one of those on a chain, he might give a little disquisition on the benefits of freedom until he rounded some corner and there was the truck from the dog pound, then he might discover that liberty was not so great after all, or if he managed to get out in the road, when one somebody driving along rather fast is coming along, so there are dogs that have liberty but no law, but there life is a perilous one indeed.

There is a third kind of dog, and this is the kind of dog that one would like to have, one that is guided by the law of liberty. That is it comes out free for its afternoon with its master, and he bounds off this way, and he bounds off that way, whatever may interest him, but he always comes back to his master. He's bound by an invisible chain. The invisible chain is the chain of affection. It's the chain of love. He loves his master because of the things that his master does for him, so there are three kinds of dogs, you know and that illustrates to some extent, now a Christian's life, is not a dog life, although it is for some of us at certain times, but it illustrates for us the fact that there are some people who cannot it seems get away from legalism in their Christian life. And then there are those, who once they discover they are not under the law, they go to the opposite extreme and live licentiously. But the true picture of the Christian life is the dog that has freedom but is bound by love, as the apostle wrote in Galatians, "By love serve one another." And so the gratitude that we have for the Lord Jesus Christ and what he has done for us, is the strongest motive for Christian living that exists, and those who know that love know exactly what that motive really is.

The apostle, in the opening verses of the 8th chapter of Romans, has set forth the fact of freedom. He has grounded it in the presence of the Holy Spirit who operates in the believer's life, with the fixedness of a law. "He has delivered us from the law of sin and death, and he has come into our lives, and is joined to us because of the atonement. What the law could not do, and that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own

Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, and when the atonement was accomplished, and sin was paid for God the Holy Spirit takes us residence in the believers whom he has brought to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ in order that,"

Now notice that purpose clause which beings the 4th verse of Romans 8, "In order that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" So those who are not under the Mosaic law as a code guided and directed by the Holy Spirit are guided and directed into a life that fulfills the righteous requirements of the law. It seems to me that is a beautiful combination of freedom, and yet a freedom that ultimately leads to the glorification of the God of the law, our great triune God.

Now the apostle in the 5th verse, moving on from that speaks of reasons why believers walk by the spirit. This "for" of the 5 verse is to be noted. When you are reading Paul remember to notice those connectives. They are the most important words in Paul's sentences "for".

Now, he is going to explain the last clause of that 4th verse,

"Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" Now, one of the reasons why believers walk by the spirit is that they are controlled by an inward inclination. Their inward inclination is to holiness. The inward inclination of the unsaved man is to unholiness. That's what Paul means in the 5th verse when he says, "For they that are after the flesh (Now, notice he says, that they taught are, that is those who actually live according to the flesh,) They mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit mind the things of the Spirit." Men follow their inward bent. The man who is the unsaved man follows his inward bent, which is to the things of the flesh. Christians follow their inward bent. Once they've come into the possession of eternal life, their inmost being is transformed. There a definitive change has taken place in their life. The Holy Spirit has come to indwell them. They desire to please God. They are hindered by

the indwelling sin that dwells within them, but they now have a new bent of life to please God. We are inclined to holiness, Paul says, and that is why we tend to walk after the spirit.

Now, the apostle goes on to give another reason, why we walk after the Spirit, and this reason in the verses that follows, is simply this that the walk after the flesh, issues in death. He says, "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." The mind of the flesh is death. The mind of the spirit is life and peace. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God:"

Now, this is, I think, one of the most important statements, in all of Paul. In fact, William GT Shedd, the well-known Orthodox theologian has said, "This is one of the tersest definitions of sin." He states, "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God." Now, if there is anything that teaches human inability, it is that statement. "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God." That means that we cannot respond to the things of God because innately we are in opposition to God. "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God." Every single individual born after Adam is born with "enmity against God." That will explain a lot of your activities.

It will explain for example why I, when I was going through college and studying classical Greek, had in my class a couple of boys who were, well it turned out they both turned out to be preachers. They were planning to be preachers too, I think, but I was careful to maintain my distance between, not simply because they were Baptists, but simply because they were interested in spiritual things. One of them has been pastor of a first Baptist chapter in Charleston, South Carolina, and other places since then, and the other has been a Bible teacher, and traveling evangelist and song leader too through the years. These two men were taking classical Greek also, and I was as well, but I knew that they had some interest in spiritual things, and so if I walked in the library, and saw them studying at a table over here, I went to the table over there because I did not want

to be in their presence. I was afraid they might bring up some question about the Bible, and I didn't have any interest about the Bible at all.

I learned afterwards, why I didn't like those two fellows. Now, I like them. "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God." We've had some fellowship together through the years, and particularly with one of them, whose views are very similar to mine, in biblical doctrine at the present time, so "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God." That's why we don't like spiritual things. That's why when we're sitting around the house, and someone says, "Let's read the Bible." We say, "Oh, I don't want to read the Bible." Or "Let's have a word of prayer." Well, we have to go through the motions, don't we? Or anything that is of spiritual significant, "The mind of the flesh is at enmity with it." Paul says. That's a great insight into human nature, and if we respond to it, and realize, "Yes, the Bible speaks the truth, then we'll go on and perhaps learn some more things from the Scripture like the deliverance being in Jesus Christ, "So the mind of the flesh is enmity against God. It is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be." Notice that. It cannot even be, so as long as the flesh exists it will never be in subjection to the Spirit of God or the things of God.

Now the Bible goes on in other places, in Paul particularly to explain this in more detail. It says for example that our minds are blinded. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. They are foolishness unto him. Neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned, so while our minds are blinded and darkened, in other places it states that our wills are rebellious against God, our emotions are corrupt, and so when we read here, "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God." It's something that touches the whole of the man.

It's very much like a man who tries to listen to a radio with his own natural ears or the high frequency signals. It would be, right at the present moment, there are all kinds of sounds in this room. If we had the proper instrument, a tuned to the proper frequency, we could hear them, but the human ear, can only hear certain sounds, at

certain frequencies. We cannot hear those high frequency sounds. It is the same thing in spiritual things. It may be illustrated in that way. We do not have the capacity since we are fallen individuals to understand biblical truth. The only way in which we can understand biblical truth is for the Holy Spirit to come and tune us to those higher frequency sounds of the spirit, so Paul says, "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God." It is just as impossible for us to respond to spiritual things as it is for you hear radio waves with your natural ears.

Now, Paul doesn't stop there. He's spoken about human inability there, as you can see, but he goes on to explain, further what all of this means. He says, "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God." It's not subject to the law of God, and then adds in the 8th verse, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." There is no power in the flesh to submit to the Lord God.

Now, you'll hear theologians talk about total depravity. What do they mean by total depravity? What do we mean when we say we are totally depraved? Do we mean that we are as bad as we can be? No, we are not as bad as we can be. We can be worse. In fact, just give us some opportunity and we will, in a certain sphere, manifest that we are worse than we may be at the present time, naturally speaking. What do theologians mean when they say that we are totally depraved? Not that we are as bad as we can be, but simply that our depravity has touched our total being, our mind, our will, our emotions. All of them are affected by sin. The whole of the man is affected, but not wholly affected yet. That is to the degree that is possible. So men are totally depraved. They cannot please God. There is human inability to respond. These two verses teach together both human ability and total depravity. Satan cannot cast out Satan, and consequently self-recovery is impossible to the human will. Self-ruin is possible. We can ruin ourselves, but we cannot deliver ourselves. As the prophet Hosea says, with reference to Israel, "Oh, Israel thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help." So self-ruin is possible for us, but self-recovery is not.

Now, I want to stop for just a moment and point out something that is, I think, extremely important for us to note. He says, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." What does that mean? Well, that means first of all, when he says, "They that are in the flesh," he's talking about unbelieving man, unregenerate men, they that are in the flesh because he will say in the next verse, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." So the presence of the Holy Spirit is the test of Christian life, and they that are in the flesh do not have the Spirit, but we are in the Spirit because we have the Holy Spirit. "They that are in the flesh" then is a reference to those who have not been converted. They are unsaved individuals. They are non-Christians. It says, "They cannot please God." Occasionally you will find people say, "The order of our salvation is believe, and then you are regenerated and possess life." I say, that is the reverse of the truth. Listen, he says, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God."

Now, if a person is in the flesh, can he do something acceptable to God? If he could, then he could please God. Let me illustrate. I was speaking with a good friend of mine. In fact, a man who was a former teacher of mine at one time in my life. We were debating this issue, among ourselves in a relatively friendly way, [Laughter] and in this debate we were discussing this question, and finally my friend said to me, "Well, now what is it in Scripture that makes you say that regeneration precedes faith?" Well, I said, "Well, there is a specific text of Scripture that teaches this." He said, "What text is that?" And I cited the text. It's 1 John 5:1. "Everyone who believes (present tense) that Jesus is the Christ has been born (perfect tense) of God." He said, "Well, that's just a general truth, that every believer has been born again." I said, "But you've failed to notice the tenses. If it's just a general truth, was it true of every believer?" Well, I said to him, "Was it true of you yesterday, that when you believed yesterday, you had been born of God?" And he said, "Well, yes."

And then I started to say, "Well, was it true of you ten years ago?" And he saw the way I was going, and he kind of changed the conversation because what I was going to say to him was "The moment that you believed in Jesus Christ was it true that you had been born of God?" And of course the answer Scripturally is, yes. "Every one who believes has been born of God," so the very moment that I come to faith in Christ I have already been born of God. John the Apostle says that. You want to stand with the apostles? I do. I want to stand with the apostles. I don't have to go into beginner's theology when I get to heaven, but some are going to have to go to beginner's theologies. Theology 101. [Laughter] Called prolegomena, to prolegomena of systematic theology, it's beginner's theology. It's one of the fundamental things of the Bible. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." It's a proper view of human nature, inability, total depravity. Well, my friend wouldn't allow me to go on and try to pin him to the wall. You know that's the natural tendency we have. That's proof that we still have indwelling sin. We want to pin our friends against the wall. [Laughter] And win the argument.

Now, I still have it too, as you, I didn't have to tell you that did I? [Laughter] You knew that. You knew that. All right now, the next time I went in I thought well now, I've to try a different approach. So this time, very innocently with an angelic look on my face, [Laughter] it's very hard for me to conger that up too. I want to assure you. I said, "Oh, by the way does faith please God?"

Now, we hadn't discussed this text. I said, "Does faith please God?" My friend said, "Oh, yes. Faith does please God of course." Imagine asking a simple little question like that. And I said, "Well, then evidentially your doctrine is, They that are in the flesh can please God." Because he believed that faith precedes regeneration, and if it's true that faith pleases God, then and if you believe that faith precedes regeneration, you believe then that "They that are in the flesh can please God." Well, he knew that was a text from the Apostle Paul, so he was shell shocked by that. Well, obviously I had all of

the advantage because I had the apostles fighting for me. There was John, and there was Paul, and there was Lewis. All three of us stood together. [Laughter]

The Bible is so plain and clear "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." So it's obvious then that we cannot believe of our selves, that there must be an operation by which we are taken out of the flesh, and placed in the spirit and the first tendency of the man who is given new life by being taken out of the flesh, and placed in the Spirit is that he believes. That's the characteristic of the new nature implanted within us, to believe the word of God from that moment on our whole presuppositions are transformed, and we have the presupposition that the Bible is the word of God, and we reason from that. We may not understand all the implications of it when we are babes, but that's the way we do even when somebody tells us this is not true in the Bible deep down within something says the Bible's correct. We'll find the answer some way. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." Total depravity, human inability is the fundamental fact of all theology. If we can get that straight then theology will become to be significant and meaningful and practical in our daily life, for there is nothing more practical than thinking God's thoughts after him.

One of the reasons we have so much difficulty today, and have to have so many messages on simple little insipid things is because we're not thinking right in the beginning. We're not thinking right about human nature, so "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." I'm not going to finish the whole message by the way today. I despise doing that, but this was so important that I did this in the 8:30 service too, and we're just going to have the same section for our study next week, except we'll pick it up at verse 12, and we'll have even the same lesson in the printed messages, so that we can ponder this properly.

Now, having said that the apostle in verse 9, 10 and 11 speaks of the believer's life and hope. He had said, in chapter 7 remember, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Unfortunately, there are Bible teachers who tell us frequently and give us the

impression that if we will follow their teaching, we will be able to reach a plane of life in which everything will be smooth sailing in the Christian life. We will have the happy, joyous, victorious Christian life, in which we are constantly overcoming, and not troubled by the difficulties and trials, and failings that the rest of the body has. That is very, very sad, teaching, in my opinion because it is not true to Scripture, and it's not true to the nature of the saved man. The result is that people are, they at first are very happy to hear about this. They are overjoyed. They go around attending Victorious Life conferences, in which there are some things that are worthwhile. I don't mean to condemn them all, but they go to conferences, and they get all excited. They have a spiritual high because there is a similarity between the two you know in Scripture. There is a high. They get on this high, but then comes the hangover of the daily life, and they discover sooner or later that there is still a struggle. There is still the presence of indwelling sin. As the apostle puts it in chapter 7, "Oh, wretched man that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death." Let me assure you my dear Christian friends that there is no complete deliverance from indwelling sin as long as we are in the body.

Now, the apostle gives us great assurance, that if we walk by the spirit, we shall have deliverance from the law of sin and death, but he also assures us that that will be in spite of a continuing struggle that goes on in the believer's life. The believer's life of sanctification is a process. It is not the attaining of a plane from which we have no problems there after. In fact, it's one struggle right on through to the end, but we should grow. We should become stronger. It's very much like growing up physically. When we are young, we're babies, and we are infants and the apostle makes it very plain of course that there is a constant babyishness that characterizes the believers. Just as a little baby is always dirty, they are such lovely little things you know, but they're always dirty. They're always spitting up or various other ways they need cleansing.

Well, the apostle speaks about the Christian life, as beginning in babyhood. We're always having difficulty and it's necessary to grow to maturity, but even then having

reached maturity we still have difficulties. When a little baby begins to walk, everybody is so thrilled over this you know. You call grandfather, and say, "Little Johnny just took his first step." Well, that's something to cheer about, but there are a whole lot of falls involved. Little Johnny got up, and he started walking around on the furniture, and he fell a number of times. Hit his head a few times. Mother's heart and father's heart are in their throats constantly.

Finally he takes one step and he waddles for two or three more. Then finally he's able to walk like a ship that's half sunk, listing and constantly falling, and that's the way you learn to walk. Well, in the spiritual life, it's very much the same way. That's the way you learn to walk in the spiritual life. It's a matter of beginning at the beginning. Taking your first step, then some more steps, then walking listing, as some Christians that seem to list for the whole of their lives. You know you watch them spiritually and that's the way they go through their spiritual life. Just about to fall, and falling more than the rest. They don't have good balance. And then there are some who have reached their maturity, but even when we reach maturity, we still can fall, and then sad to say. Sad to say, when we get old, we start toppling again. It's rather sad.

Now, the apostle here in Romans chapter 8 verse 9 through verse 11 gives us the final answer to "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Let me assure you there is no final deliverance, until the resurrection of the body. This is the full and final answer to that question. There are so many people who read Romans 8 as if the full and final answer of who shall deliver me is the presence of the Holy Spirit now, and therefore I ought to have complete deliverance now. No, no, no, the struggle still goes on. It is only complete at the resurrection. Listen to what he says.

"Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." That's the test of Christianity. You have a right to look at me and say, "Do I see anything in Dr. Johnson that reflects the presence of the Holy Spirit?" And I have a right to look at your life, and

say, "Is there anything there that reflects the presence of the Holy Spirit?" I am not the final judge of you, nor are you the final judge of me. It's possible there may be something in your life that I don't see because I don't see clearly, but "He that hath not the spirit of Christ is none of his." The test of the possession of spiritual life is not membership in a church. The test of the possession of spiritual life is not water baptism. It is not sitting at the Lord's table. It is not attendance of meetings in an evangelical church. The final test of the possession of spiritual life is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life. "He that hath not the spirit of Christ is none of his."

So the apostle says, "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Incidentally in that 9th verse he says, you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwells in you. Did you notice anything unusual about that? He says, you are in the Spirit and the Spirit is in you. Have you ever tried to figure that out? How can I be in the Spirit and the Spirit in me? That seems as if it's a contradiction. What kind of language is this? Well, this is the language of an element. It's the language of water, air, fire, the earth. Take a plant. A plant is in the ground, but the qualities of the ground come to be in the plant. Take a poker. Put it in a fire. Soon the fire is in the poker. Take a fish. Put a fish in water, but the water is in the fish, or a bird.

Now, this morning, we looked out of the window, and there was a woodpecker. It was confused because it was on the ground, but nevertheless [Laughter] it was a woodpecker. Now, that bird flying through the air, there is air in the bird. So the language that the apostle uses is the language of an element. It's the union that is so close that only an element can describe it. We are in the Spirit, and the Spirit is in us. And his presence is the test of spiritual living.

Now, he says, "If Christ be in you the body is dead because of sin. It's destined to die, but the spirit the human spirit is life on account of imputed righteousness. We do have a redeemed spirit and if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus, (Incidentally that's not

the spirit that raised him up, he doesn't say, "If the spirit who raised up Jesus,") but it's the Spirit of him, the Father, that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also give life your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you." That is the final answer to Paul's, "Oh, wretched man that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Oh, my Christian friend, you will never be delivered from the body of this death, until the resurrection, and then you will have sin eradicated, indwelling sin, the cause of difficulty and trial and struggle through all of your Christian life, will be eliminated. You will be given a body like unto the glorious body of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then you will be unable to say, "Oh, wretched man that I am, but oh, blessed man that I am that I have been delivered from the body that is indwelt by the sin principle. It's not until then.

That verse is the answer to the apostle's question in chapter 7, and we certainly misunderstand the Scriptures if we do not understand that. Let me sum up. Nothing less than the Spirit's presence is genuine Christianity. It's not enough to have an intellectual conviction of the preeminence of Jesus of Nazareth. That's not enough. It's not enough to have decided to adopt the ethical ideal of Jesus. That's not enough. It's not enough to imitate his example. If we are to have life, we must have him through the spirit.

James Denny once commented on the fact that in our Christian churches we often recite the creed, which has a line that says, "I believe in the Holy Ghost." There's nothing wrong in that. "I believe in the Holy Ghost." But have you ever noticed that there is no such statement in the New Testament? That is implied. There is nothing wrong with it, but the emphasis, is not the emphasis of the New Testament. When Paul met those disciples at Ephesus as he looked at them and he said, "Now, wait these guys may not really have it. I look at their lives and I'm not sure that they have the Holy Spirit." They were the disciples of John remember, and so what he said to them was not do you believe in the Holy Ghost. He said, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And of course they said, "We haven't even heard of the Holy Spirit." They had apparently

wondered off into the backside of the country over there, like going out to Fort Worth, [Laughter] and they hadn't heard anything, and as a result of that they didn't know, and so Paul laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Well, you see the test of genuine Christianity is the possession of the vital person of the Holy Spirit, and his presence is the guarantee of deliverance, and it's the guarantee of ultimate deliverance in the resurrection of the body. When we are delivered from indwelling sin. He initiates the action. We follow. We walk after the Spirit. We are lead by the Spirit, but our deliverance is a process. The Canaanites still in the land, we are escaping, but the enemies' dogs are baying at our feet. And the result is that we are nevertheless though redeemed in the midst of a great struggle. When the children of Israel were going through the wilderness, God gave them wonderful guidance. He said, "I am going to give you the guidance of a pillar of cloud in the daytime, and a pillar of fire at night." And when that pillar moved, they were to move. When the pillar stayed still, they were to stay still. They were walking by the pillar, by the pillar of cloud, the pillar of fire. That is exactly the way we, as Christians, walk. We walk by the Spirit. I know what you are saying. "Oh, if it just has something visible that I could peak out the window, and see if it was still there, then I could have my problems answered."

We're so inclined to think that it would have been better to have lived then. Listen we have something far greater than the pillar of cloud, and the pillar of fire. We have the personal third person of the Trinity who has come to indwell the heart of every believer and they're to constantly give us guidance. The church is not worse off than Israel. We are better off. There is nothing more exciting, my dear Christian friends than walking by the Spirit. Just try it. Take a step by the Spirit. You might be like that little infant and topple over. Hit your head, but sooner or later you'll come to learn to distinguish his voice from other voices, and what it is to walk by the Spirit. And then your life will be lifted above the bitter exhausting life of the Christian masses, and you will understand something about what it is to walk as the apostle speaks here. You won't

be without mistakes. You'll make many mistakes, but you'll also know the joy of some measure of victory in your Christian life, and you can look forward with real anticipation to the coming again of the Lord Jesus, when we receive our new bodies, and full deliverance. Our time is late. If you are here and you have never believed in Christ of course you don't even have the Holy Spirit. There is no way in which you can walk by the Spirit. You need to come to him. Receive him as Savior and with him the presence of the Holy Spirit. Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father, we are do grateful to Thee for the blessings of life, and we thank Thee for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Enable us, Lord, to live as the apostle has set forth for us here, this third alternative, life by the Spirit, for Jesus' sake. Amen.