

Sermon Title: The Holy Spirit Empowers Believers To Have Victory Over The Flesh

Sermon Text: Romans 8:12-13

Sermon Purpose: To exhort the hearer to live in obligation to the Spirit and not the flesh.

Sermon Proposition: There are 3 basic concepts involved in expressing the victory of the Holy Spirit.

Introduction: Paul has just previously made evident in (vv. 5-11) that every true born again Christian is indwelt by God's own Spirit and that their new spiritual life as a result will not be characterized by worldly, fleshly concerns and activities, but be characterized by the priorities, values, and purposes of God. The apostle's want to emphasize in (vv.12-13), the Christian's responsibility to eliminate sin in their life through the empowering, enabling, and equipping work of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

"In his often-republished book *The Reformed Pastor*, the seventeenth-century Puritan Richard Baxter wrote,

Take heed to yourselves, lest you live in those sins which you preach against in others, and lest you be guilty of that which daily you condemn. Will you make it your work to magnify God, and, when you have done, dishonor him as much as others? Will you proclaim Christ's governing power, and yet condemn it, and rebel yourselves? Will you preach his laws, and willfully break them? If sin be evil, why do you live in it? If it be not, why do you dissuade men from it? If it be dangerous, how dare you venture on it? If it be not, why do you tell men so? If God's threatenings be true, why do you not fear them? If they be false, why do you needlessly trouble men with them, and put them into such frights without a cause? Do you "know the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death;" and yet will you do them? 'Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery,' or be drunk, or covetous, art thou such thyself? 'Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?' What! Shall the same tongue speak evil that speakest against evil? Shall those lips censure, and slander, and backbite your neighbor, that cry down these and the like things in others? Take heed to yourselves, lest you cry down sin, and yet do not overcome it; lest, while you seek to bring it down in others, you bow to it, and become its slaves yourselves: 'For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage.' 'To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.' O brethren! It is easier to chide at sin, than to overcome it . . . Many a tailor goes in rags, that maketh costly clothes for others; and many a cook scarcely licks his fingers, when he hath dressed for others the most costly dishes. ([Carlisle, Pa: Banner of Truth, 1974], pp. 67-68)"

[John MacArthur, *The New MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Romans 1-8* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 420-421.]

I. The Holy Spirit empowers Christians to live free of fleshly control. V.12

Paul reminds his readers of the magnificent privilege of victory over sin that Christians have through the resident Holy Spirit. Paul declares that there are consequences of this new relationship for the day-to-day life of the believer. Christians, have no more "obligation" to the flesh, to live "according to it," to follow its desires or obey its mastery.

The term "flesh" sums up what we often call "the world." (**1 John 2:15** Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that *is* in the world-- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life-- is not of the Father but is of the world.) This would include all that is characterized by the old life in its fallenness and rebellion to God. It refers to the power and powers of the old realm and age, that Christians are no longer to render obedience to. (**Gal 5:19-21; 1 Cor 6:9-11**)

All biblical exhortations, instruction, and commandments to Christians are based on the blessings and promises they already have been provided by the Lord. Without the provisions of the Lord God Almighty, we would be unable to fulfill the commands we received from God.

II. The Holy Spirit empowers Christians to live free of eternal death. V.13a

Paul's point to the brethren, that if someone continues to live by the dictates of the flesh they will certainly experience eternal death or condemnation. How we live does matter! How we do not live does matter!

III. The Holy Spirit empowers the Christian to fulfill their obligation to the Spirit. V.13b

Murray states, "The believers once-for-all death to the law of sin does not free him from the necessity of mortifying sin in his members; it makes it necessary and possible for him to do so." [Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans NCI on New Testament* p. 494]

Paul clearly states or verifies that his readers will be damned if they continue to follow fleshly desires and dictates. As a result of having been given new life and the Spirit of God, we as believers have new responsibilities and obligations.

"Like slaves who might out of habit, obey their old masters even after being released – 'legally' and 'positionally' – from them, so we Christians can still listen to and heed the voice of that old master of ours, the flesh." Ibid., 494

Two views of how this works in the Christian life:

1. Armenians believe that a regenerate believer may indeed, fall back into a "fleshly" lifestyle so that the threat of this verse becomes real.
2. Calvinist believe that the truly regenerate believe, while often committing "fleshly acts," will be infallible prevented from being a fleshly lifestyle by the Spirit within." (5:9-10; 8:1-4; 10-11) Ibid. 494-495

Neither the "indicative" – what God has done for us in Christ – nor the "imperative" what we are commanded to do can be eliminated. Holy living is the outworking of what God has done and provided for us and to us in Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit. These two facts cannot and must not be separated from one another. "Christians have the potential to be perfect." The potential is there, even though it may not be your experience. Question how do I experience my potential?

- 1) 2 Cor 10:3-7 Learn to fight properly.
- 2) Gal 5:16-17, 24-25 Walk in the Spirit
- 3) 1 Cor 6:11 Understand you are not what you were
- 4) Col 3:16-17; Eph 5:18 Be filled and controlled by the Word of God and the Spirit of God
- 5) Philippians 3:7-12 Set proper priorities
- 6) Romans 12:1-2 Rejoice and live out the mercies of God.