

“The Holy Spirit”

OT: **Psalm 51:10-17** (NIV); Gospel: **Romans 8:1-11** (NIV)

August 16, 2020

INTRODUCTION

Paul's Letter to the Romans is a timeless message of God's righteousness and our struggle with sin and evil, grace and love. As it was in the beginning and is today, sin and evil surround us. Lawlessness is tolerated, even encouraged, by some politicians ignoring their oath to uphold the law and serve and protect all the people. Peaceful protests which are the right of every American too often turn violent. Rioting, looting, arson, murder, and other violent crimes are dramatically increasing, and the root causes too often ignored. Disrespect of Police Officers leads to hundreds being assaulted and murdered. Public property is destroyed. Churches are desecrated and our religious beliefs attacked. God's Holy Word is discounted as irrelevant by many in this country, and behaviors condemned by God are lifted-up. Our moral decline is evident as many reject God and the Christian life. Jesus warned us about accommodating ourselves to the ways of the world. There is a price to be paid for not following the way of Christ. And now, we are paying it! This morning the Apostle Paul has a message of hope for believers in Jesus Christ.

Paul writes the Letter to the Romans as a prisoner in Rome. Paul is guided by the Spirit to carry the Gospel message to the capital of the Roman Empire. Jewish believers in Rome are merging Jewish and Christian beliefs. They and Gentile believers need to hear Paul's message of the Messiah as Lord of the World, and in whom God's justice is revealed. Paul teaches if you want justice you will not find it in the Roman Emperor as Lord, but only in Jesus Christ as Lord. By Roman Law, his first loyalty as a citizen should be to the Emperor. He knows his message on Christ will be perceived as an attack on Caesar. Paul also understands the risk of incurring imperial wrath and judgment. Without personal regard for his safety, he follows where Christ leads and is executed on Vatican Hill as a martyr to his faith. Paul walks the talk!

Paul's guidance to Christians then and to us in Romans 8:1-11 is to Live in the Spirit of Christ! In **Romans 8:1-4 (NIV)**, did you hear Paul saying we should ignore the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, as the Law of God? Are we to ignore the Ten Commandments? No! Paul lifts-up God's Torah and Commandments as holy and just. We are to do our best to live by them. He teaches Living in the Spirit of Christ is not about trying to perfectly obey God's Law as preached by the Pharisees. They taught the Jews must live the Ten Commandments and 600 other purity laws to be judged righteous. Who could live up to that standard? When they are unable to, they are condemned as Godless. Jesus calls the Pharisees hypocrites for placing intolerable burdens on the people.

Paul acknowledges we are all sinners and though we try, we cannot live God's Law. His point is trying to live by the Law does not free us from sin, only God does. God sent His Son as perfect God and perfect Man to do for us by His life and death what we and the Law could not do. What the Law was powerless to do because of our sin, God did by the saving grace of Jesus atoning for our sins. It is the Spirit of Life in Christ that sets us free from slavery to sin and eternal death. The righteous requirements of God are met in all who believe and Live in Christ Jesus. Give thanks to our Heavenly Father that though we are sinners, He loved us enough to sacrifice His Son on our behalf.

Read Romans 8: 5-11. “The mind of sinful man is death. There are people who do not know Christ because they choose to follow what Paul calls “their bodily nature.” They choose to ignore or attack the love and grace of Jesus. They reject Him and willingly follow the Evil One as obedient slaves to sin. Jesus in His parables of the “Narrow Gate” and the “Sheep and the Goats” teaches they have no part in Him. They walk the path of eternal death to a Hell named in Hebrew as “Sheol,” and in Greek, as “Ghenna.”

Paul speaks to all followers of Christ that the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace. Paul assures us we are claimed by Christ and His Spirit dwells within us. Those chosen to live in and obey Christ choose not to be slaves to sin. We live in His grace, peace, and love. Sin as the controlling force in our lives is defeated, but we are still a target of opportunity for the Great Tempter. We fight a constant battle against Satan trying to turn us

Sermon. Romans 8-11. Cooks. 081620 (revised)

against God. We place our trust and our hope in the righteousness and saving grace of Jesus Christ in the Spirit. In and through Jesus we are justified and redeemed, made right with God for New, Spiritual Life. (PAUSE) Paul writes of the Holy Spirit, but what do we know about Him? The Bible, in the Old and New Testaments reveals all we need to know and believe about the Holy Spirit.

In the **Old Testament** He is described as the breath, wind, and Spirit of God. He is the agent of creation changing the earth from a formless void covered in darkness to a world created for us. This world we live in came into being by the thought, the mere expression of His will, with a power beyond our comprehension. Throughout the **OT** the Holy Spirit empowers God's **Prophets** to proclaim His Word and Will. He promises to guide the Prophets in their service to Him. Some of these men initially do not feel up to the call while others decide they don't want to go there. They claim ignorance, lack of training, or fear of failure. Moses is the poster boy for this behavior. In **Exodus 3 and 4**, Moses is confronted by God in the burning bush. God tells him He has heard His enslaved people's cry and tells Moses, "Tell Pharaoh to let My people go." He comes up with every excuse to talk God out of calling him. **1.** Who am I to do such a thing; **2.** No one will listen to me; **3.** They won't believe I am sent by You; **4.** I'm not an eloquent speaker; and finally: **5.** Please send someone, anyone else. But God does not listen to excuses. He reassures Moses and all who are chosen to serve that His Spirit will give us the words to speak and the knowledge of what to do in serving His people. In **Psalm 51**, the Holy Spirit is the voice from within guiding us to God's purpose for our life. It is the Spirit that brings us joy and sustains us in the hard times we encounter. He comforts and encourages us to experience joy in our faithful service. The Holy Spirit is always by our side. He renews, transforms, and restores us to love, follow, and serve Him.

The Holy Spirit is revealed in the **New Testament** by Jesus and the Apostle Paul as the instrument of divine action in our lives. In the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Confession, we affirm our belief that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. In **John Chapter 14: 15-17**, Jesus promises to send the Spirit of Truth to all who love Him and keep His commands. "If you love Me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another counselor to be with you forever – The Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept Him because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives in you and will be in you." The Spirit of Truth is the Spirit of Jesus, for Jesus is the truth of God. He is our comforter, advocate, helper, and guide. He is our champion and defender in the war waged against us by the King of Lies and Deceit. There is nothing to fear from Satan or the chaos of the world. Jesus promises the love and grace of His Spirit will be in and around you and me, FOREVER!

Throughout his Letter to the Romans, Paul speaks eloquently about the work of the Holy Spirit based on first-hand experience. As Saul, the Pharisee, he is on the road to Damascus to arrest Christians. He receives his call to discipleship by the Spirit of Christ. Jesus chooses Saul to be His disciple and strikes him down in a blinding light forever changing his life. He becomes Paul, the great evangelist organizing Churches for Jesus, spreading the Gospel throughout the western world. The Holy Spirit speaks to us through his letters in the Bible on the theology of God, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and what it means to be Christian. When Jesus speaks to us, and His Spirit surrounds us, is within us, and calling us, will you accept the call as did Paul and act upon it? Or will you be like Moses who gives God five excuses why he cannot serve Him? When God calls, He does not take no for an answer regardless of how much we try to ignore Him. Even with our doubts and reluctance to change the comfortable patterns of our life, the Spirit influences us to walk the path of faithful obedience, until we say, "Here I am Lord!"

CLOSING

When we pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and He comes upon us in a dream, or whispers deep within our heart and mind, or in a life altering encounter, then our wants take a back seat. We live in the Spirit of Christ and follow Him rather than in ways contradicting God's will. We recognize the things valued by society such as wealth, professional reputation, power, and ego, are perishable and diminish in importance. We accept it is the things of God revealed by the Spirit that are eternal, and our highest priority. **Our calling is to Live in**

the Spirit. Be a **God Sighting** reflecting the image of Christ in our words and behaviors so that others come to Jesus. **“FOLLOW THE SPIRIT**, doing His works, keeping His commands, and you will be blessed, and others blessed through you. Amen.