

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

JUNE 13 - 17, 2022



LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Pentecost Series
Jun 12 - Aug 7

MONDAY

Read **Romans 5:5-8; Genesis 3:4-9; Hebrews 11:4-11**

This week's theme is "the futility of life apart from the Spirit." The related problems confronting each of us as "recovering humans"—pridefulness and its byproducts, selfishness, etc.—originated in the Garden of Eden.

Like the true and living God, we are triune: body, soul (personality, thoughts and emotions, intelligence) and spirit (the aspect of our design inclined toward God, our vitality). God created the first humans, Adam and Eve, to be spirit-led, their souls following and bodies subordinated. Upon their disobedience to God, however, both "flipped upside down": they became flesh-led, soul closely following and spirit withering apart from God. Regrettably, each of us inherits this "upside-down" orientation, misdirecting us and all natural people from birth.

When God asked Adam, "*Where are you?*" (Genesis 3:9) upon their fall, His question wasn't geographic but an appeal to self-awareness. Fortunately, God loves us too much to leave us unreconciled to Him. As today's Hebrews text indicates, Adam's and Eve's second son, Abel, responded to God's call. Their great-great-great-great grandson, Enoch, also "*walked with God*" (Genesis 5:24), as did Noah, Job, Abraham and Sarah, and others subsequently.

God could have left Adam and Eve in the Garden, their ongoing access to its "*tree of life*" (Genesis 2:9) "*sustaining*" them thereafter. In this

scenario they would continue declining spiritually and otherwise due to broken relationship with Him. However, God barred them from the Garden (Genesis 3:23), having a better plan for humankind. When judging the “serpent” (representing Satan) for deceiving Eve at the fall, God foretold His remedy in Jesus, “the Lamb ... slain from the creation of the world” (Revelation 13:8): “He shall bruise your head; and you shall bruise His heel” (Genesis 3:15).

Life in the Spirit or apart from Him are choices—choices made not only upon first surrendering to Jesus’ Lordship, but also daily, moment by moment. When I deny Him, supplanting God from His rightful throne in my life, my sin repels the Spirit and abundant life. If a Christian, I do not then become “lost” again upon sinning, but forego God’s best until repenting prayerfully and sincerely. Are your choices today life-affirming, embracing the Spirit?

QUESTIONS

How are human’s designed “triune”? What does “Upon their disobedience to God, Adam and Eve flipped upside down” mean? Why did God bar Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden?

PRAYERS

For African Enterprise

Primary Mission. “To evangelize the cities of Africa through Word and Deed in partnership with the Church.” African Enterprise reaches every social strata with the Gospel through city-wide missions, mobilizing thousands of local volunteers and churches. Pray for on-going commitment and dedication, and for God’s blessing on its mission.

TUESDAY

Read **Romans 8:5-6; Galatians 5:16-17; John 3:3-8**

Two extreme errors occur in Christendom regarding the Holy Spirit. Pentecostal and other “charismatic” denominations make the Spirit paramount. However, the Bible repeatedly reinforces the Spirit’s mission to glorify Christ (i.e., John 16:14); thus, extreme Spirit glorification counters His purpose. Equally misguided is ignoring the Spirit, a problem among some “theologically oriented” churches. Jon Courson once quipped, “The church I grew up in considered the Trinity [to be] Father, Son and Holy Bible.”

“[The] four general areas in which the Holy Spirit works: 1) regeneration, 2) indwelling (or filling), 3) restraint, and 4) empowerment for service. ... [Spirit-led] regeneration [surfaces] in Ezekiel 11:19-20 and ... 36:26-29. ... The New Testament teaches the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). ... Indwelling in the Old Testament [however] was selective and temporary. The Spirit ‘came upon’ such Old Testament people as Joshua (Numbers 27:18), David (1 Samuel 16:12-13) and even [Israel’s King] Saul (1 Samuel 10:10). ... Genesis 6:3 ... [indicates] that the Holy Spirit restrains man’s sinfulness. ... Bezalel in Exodus 31:2-5 ... was gifted to do much of the artwork relating to the Tabernacle [per Spirit-granted abilities]. ... Genesis 1:2 speaks of the Spirit ‘hovering over the waters’ and superintending the work of creation.” (GotQuestions.org)

Imagine the related challenges facing ancient Jews! Judaism emphasized centuries-old religious rites and traditions. Israel's longstanding favor with God prompted cultural self-righteousness. And though the Spirit moved pre-Christ, His work was more apparent throughout the New Testament. Among Israel's elite, the Sadducees rejected the Spirit outright. Then this itinerant rabbi from lowly Nazareth arrives, doing miracles and other Messianic works empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Nicodemus' confusion in his famous exchange with Jesus is understandable. This venerated scholar, "*Israel's teacher*" (John 3:10), was baffled in hearing that one must be "*born again ... of water and the Spirit [to] enter the kingdom of God*" (John 3:3, 5). "*How can a man be born when he is old?*" (John 3:4) asked Nicodemus, blinded by worldly logic.

Which mistake regarding the Spirit are you more prone toward—overemphasis or deemphasis? Whom do you know who, like Nicodemus, needs to embrace the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit?

QUESTIONS

What are the errors and perils in "extreme views" of the Holy Spirit among Christian churches? Why was Nicodemus confused in his famous exchange (John 3) with Jesus?

PRAYERS

For African Enterprise

Foxfires. Foxfire Teams are the youth arm of AE's Evangelistic and Mission activities. Teams of about ten young African Christians have a passion for sharing the Gospel. They have often experienced great personal hardships, allowing them to speak to the hearts of young people experiencing similar situations. Pray for the teams' continued spiritual fervor.

WEDNESDAY

Read **John 14:25-27; Hebrews 3:7-15; Matthew 11:28-30**

“To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace” (Romans 8:6). The penman, Paul, understood this well. Born Saul of Tarsus, Paul’s earlier life was awash in religious legalism, beginning with his orthodox Jewish upbringing and training under ancient Israel’s most revered teacher, Gamaliel. The fruit of Saul’s passionate religiosity? Advancing within Israel’s religious hierarchy, Saul’s career featured strife and violence, ongoing persecution of the fledgling Christian church (Acts 8:3).

Saul misguidedly thought he was serving and honoring God. Like many, however, he labored under the burden of works-based religion. He had not yet *“entered [God’s] rest”* (Hebrews 3:11)—rest from fleshly striving to “earn salvation.” Ironically, Saul was God’s enemy and hopelessly lost, 180° from his self-image. It took Jesus’ intervention amidst a ride toward Damascus (Acts 9) to convert Saul into the Apostle Paul, thereafter a pillar of the early church.

Despite Paul’s Christian ministry, including *“imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death, five times ... [receiving] forty lashes ... and three times ... beaten with rods, once ... stoned ... [and] three times ... shipwrecked”* (2 Corinthians 11:23-25), he *“learned in whatever situation I am to be content”* (Philippians 4:11). External

circumstances aside, Paul had entered God’s rest in Christ and embraced the peace—“*the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding*” (Philippians 4:7)—that Jesus embodies and promises.

“If our minds are set on the things of the *Spirit*, we ... discover a life characterized by peace; if our minds are set on the *flesh*, we will experience *hostility* toward God. ... The mindset of the flesh is death because it is enmity against God—the unconverted sinner is actually a rebel against God and in active hostility to Him—he ... ‘does his own thing’ ... Fleshly minds are not subject to the law of God—they want their own will, not God’s will.” (D.W. Ekstrand)

Many long for peace—it’s a central theme of songs, politics and greater culture. Yet peace is evasive in our fallen world. Whom do you know yearning for peace while living apart from the “*Prince of Peace*” (Isaiah 9:6)? Use Paul’s story to share Jesus with them.

QUESTIONS

What does it mean to “*enter God’s rest*”? How was Saul of Tarsus’ (nee the Apostle Paul’s) orientation toward God 180° from what he thought it was? What does “the mindset of the flesh is death” mean?

PRAYERS

For African Enterprise

Peace and Reconciliation. Where there is civil unrest, AE is actively engaging grassroots, national and church leaders to speak about Peace and Reconciliation and the value of Righteous Leadership. Workshops address issues, such as: God’s intention for relationships, their roles, trauma healing, psychosocial support, the power of prejudice, etc. Pray that God’s Spirit heals adversarial relationships.

THURSDAY

Read **Romans 8:7; Genesis 32:22-31**

It is amazing that God used Jacob to father Israel's twelve tribes! Jacob means "heel-catcher" or "supplanter," a name both descriptive and prophetic. Jacob's minutes-older brother, Esau, once complained to their father about his fraternal twin's trickery: "[Jacob] has supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright, and now he has taken away my blessing" (Genesis 27:36).

The "mind ... set on the flesh" (Romans 8:7) indicates one—including each of us in fallenness—who unseats God. Upon sinning, I displace God, putting myself and fleshly desires on the throne that God should rightly occupy. Fortunately, when Christians prayerfully repent, God forgives—He then resumes His place as Lord of our lives, restoring us under the fountain of His blessings.

Despite favored lineage among Israel's patriarchs (as Abraham's grandson and Isaac's son), Jacob spent earlier years supplanting God—his relationship with Esau was an apt illustration. But a day of reckoning came, the context for today's Genesis 32:22-31 reading. Jacob prepared to meet his vengeful brother many years later. The night before, desperately needing rest, Jacob ended up "wrestling with God" until daybreak—an image of his prideful life and supplanting ways. At this "contest's" conclusion, God mercifully blessed Jacob, renaming him "Israel" ("one who strives with God") while injuring him (Genesis 32:25, 31) both as a consequence and a reminder.

“Fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: he is a rebel who must lay down his arms [and repent] ... unlearning self-conceit and self-will and killing (the sinful) part of [himself]. ... The essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride ... [which prompts] every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind.” (C.S. Lewis)

The postscript to today’s Genesis story: at their reunion, “*Esau ran up to meet [Jacob] ... and kissed him, and they wept.*” (Genesis 33:4). I believe God benevolently changed Esau’s heart toward his brother, much as He redirected Jacob’s life. Regrettably, as a believer I can sometimes lapse into Israel-like behavior, even that of Jacob, when sinning. But God compassionately restores His own. Whom do you know who has supplanted the Restorer? Lovingly share the Gospel with them.

QUESTIONS

How was Jacob’s name both descriptive and prophetic?
Why did God rename Jacob as Israel? Why did God injure Israel at the end of their all-night wrestling match?

PRAYERS

For African Enterprise

Community Development. AE has several holistic and transformative social action programs that demonstrate the love of Christ to vulnerable and marginalized communities, such as: early childhood education, water and sanitation, vocational education, vulnerable women rehabilitation, health education, hospitals, HIV education, apprenticeships and community self-help groups. Pray that God’s love is clearly visible to these communities.

FRIDAY

Read **Romans 8:8; 1 Samuel 16:7; Acts 5:1-11**

Paul and Holy Spirit were “flesh-focused” throughout this week’s featured Scripture: “[living] according to the flesh” (Romans 8:5), “the mind [set] on the flesh” (8:6-7), and today’s “those who are set on the flesh” (8:8). Elsewhere Paul shared a list of Spirit-denying, fleshly byproducts: “sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies ...” (Galatians 5:19-21).

“There is a seat of authority within every person ... [which] is the monitor of the complete life. ... This inner throne of personal authority was designed by the Creator for His own occupancy ... though it is possible for [one] to dethrone God and turn the occupancy of the throne over to Satan. This is what Adam did in Eden. ... ‘In the flesh’ [identifies] the condition that exists when the soul rejects its Creator ... and decides to make the present life of flesh its ... only concern.”
(James Burton Coffman)

Given Paul’s “fruits of the flesh” list above, consider Ananias’ and Sapphira’s story (Acts 5). They publicly pledged a generous gift to the fledgling Jerusalem church, secretly retaining a portion. Their desire for public praise amidst hidden deceit cost them their lives. Surely Ananias’ and Sapphira’s offense was minor compared to

Paul's list of fleshly consequences, right? After all, they willingly contributed something appearing substantial. Israel's ancient prophet, Samuel, sheds light upon their judgment: "... *the LORD looks on the heart*" (1 Samuel 16:7).

Beginning in Eden, our spirit and flesh continually battle for influence over human hearts and minds. Even Paul wrestled here: "*Nothing good dwells ... in my flesh. ... I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out ... [due to the] sin that dwells within me*" (Romans 7:18-20). Paul, like us, was a recovering human with selfish inclinations.

Even when aiming to do "godly things," the things done "in the flesh" are rubbish in God's economy. Selfish aims—even when related ends appear "good"—"close the circuit" to the Spirit's work. The preventative safeguard? Ongoing prayer, heartfelt worship of God, selfless service, and sacrifices solely for His glory.

QUESTIONS

What are the problems with being "*in the flesh*"? Why did God strike Ananias and Sapphira dead? Does it surprise you that the Apostle Paul wrestled with his natural fallenness just like the rest of us do?

PRAYERS

For African Enterprise

Training Pastors. Local pastors are often completely untrained in theology and Bible basics, leading them to spread a false Gospel to their congregations. AE's Pastor's Theology Course offers free training to local pastors to bring the richness of the Gospel to life in the local church. Pray that the true Gospel is preached throughout Africa.

Sources

- Jon Courson's quote is from his "Searchlight" radio broadcasting ministry.
- GotQuestions.org's quote can be found at <https://www.gotquestions.org/Spirit-Old-Testament.html>.
- Dr. D.W. Ekstrand's quote can be found at www.thetransformedsoul.com/additional-studies/spiritual-life-studies/living-life-in-the-spirit.
- C.S. Lewis' quote is from his book, *Mere Christianity*; publishers: Geoffrey Bles (UK), Macmillan Publishers and HarperCollins Publishers (US), 1952.
- James Burton Coffman's quote can be found at <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/eng/bcc/romans-8.html>.

