

Body in Christ (Reading)

by Watchman Nee

Watchman Nee emphasizes the necessity of living in the spirit to experience the fullness of life in Christ, relying on the Holy Spirit for victory over the flesh.

Duration: 27:16

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 3:3, Romans 6:23, Romans 8:1-2, Galatians 2:20

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Faith In Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that the preaching of the word of God is not something new, but a revelation of what has already been given. The speaker highlights the importance of understanding that through faith in Christ, there is no need to repeat the struggles and willpower displayed in Romans 7. Instead, by trusting in God and allowing Him to act, believers can enter into a different law, the law of the spirit of life. The sermon also emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in imparting the blessings and grace that God has provided through Jesus Christ.

Transcript

The flesh is linked with Adam, the spirit with Christ. Leaving aside now a settled question of whether we are in Adam or in Christ, we must ask ourselves, am I living in the flesh or in the spirit? To live in the flesh is to do something out from myself as in Adam. It is to derive strength from the old natural source of life that I inherited from him, so that I enjoy and experience all Adam's very complete provision for sinning, which all of us have found so effective.

Now the same is true of what is in Christ. To enjoy and experience what is true of me as in him, I must learn what it is to walk in the spirit. It is a historic fact that in Christ my old man was crucified, and it is a present fact that I am blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

But if I do not live in the spirit, then my life may be quite a contradiction of the fact that I am in Christ. For what is true of me in him is not expressed in me. I may recognise that I am in Christ, but I may also have to face the fact that my old temper is very much in evidence.

What is the trouble? It is that I am holding the truth merely objectively, whereas what is true objectively must be made true subjectively. And that is brought about as I live in the spirit. Am I in Christ? But Christ is in me.

And just as physically a man cannot live and work in water, but only in air, so spiritually Christ dwells and manifests himself not in flesh, but in spirit. Therefore, if I live after the flesh, I find that what is mine in Christ is, so to say, held in suspense in me. Though in fact I am in Christ, yet if I live in the flesh, that is in my own strength and under my own direction, then in experience I find to my dismay that it is what is in Adam that manifests itself in me.

If I would know in experience all that is in Christ, then I must learn to live in the spirit. Living in the spirit means that I trust the Holy Spirit to do in me what I cannot do myself. This life is completely different from the life that I would naturally live of myself.

Each time I am faced with a new demand from the Lord, I look to him to do in me what he requires of me. It is not a case of trying, but of trusting, not of struggling, but of resting in him. If I have a hasty temper, impure thoughts, a quick tongue, or a critical spirit, I shall not set out with a determined effort to change myself.

But, reckoning myself dead in Christ to these things, I shall look to the Spirit of God to produce in me the needed purity or humility or meekness. This is what it means to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord which he will work for you. The divine way of victory does not permit of our doing anything at all, anything that is to say outside of Christ.

This is because as soon as we move we run into danger, but our natural inclinations take us in the wrong direction. Where then are we to look for help? Turn now to Matthew 5 verse 17. The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.

In other words, the flesh does not fight against us, but against the Holy Spirit, for these are contrary one to the other. And it is he, not we, who meets and deals with the flesh. What is the result? That he may not do the things that he would.

I think we have often understood that last clause of this verse in a wrong sense. Let us consider what it means. What would we do naturally? We would move off on some course of action dictated by our own instincts, and apart from the will of God.

The effect then of our refusal to act out from ourselves is that the Holy Spirit is free to meet and deal with the flesh in us. Would the result that we shall not do what we naturally would do, that is, we shall not act according to our natural inclinations, we shall not go off on a course and plan of our own, but shall find instead our satisfaction in his perfect plan. Hence we have the principle, walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

If we live in the Spirit, if we walk by faith in the risen Christ, we can truly stand aside while the Spirit gains new victories over the flesh every day. He has been given to us to take charge of this business. Our victory lies in hiding in Christ, and in counting in simple trust upon his Holy Spirit to overcome in us our freshly lusts with his own new desires.

The cross has been given to procure salvation for us. The Spirit has been given to produce salvation in us. Christ risen and ascended is the basis of our salvation.

Christ in our hearts by the Spirit is its power. I thank God through Jesus Christ. That explanation of Paul's is fundamentally the same as his other words in Galatians 2.20, which were taken as the key to our study.

I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ. We saw how prominent is the word I throughout his argument in Romans 7, culminating in the agonized cry, O wretched man that I am. Then follows the shout of deliverance, Thank God, Jesus Christ.

It is clear that the discovery Paul has made is this, that the life we live is the life of Christ alone. We think of the Christian life as a changed life, but it is not that. God offers us an exchanged life, a substituted life, and Christ is our substitute within.

I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me. This life is not something which we ourselves have to produce, it is Christ's own life reproduced in us. How many Christians believe in reproduction in this sense, as something more than regeneration? Regeneration means that the life of Christ is planted in us by the Holy Spirit at our new birth.

Reproduction goes further. It means that that new life grows and becomes manifest progressively in us until the very likeness of Christ begins to be reproduced in our lives. That is what Paul means when he speaks of his travail for the Galatians, until Christ be formed in you.

God will not give me humility or patience or holiness or love as separate gifts of his grace. He is not a retailer, dispensing grace to us in doses, measuring out some patience to the impatient, some love to the unloving, some meekness to the proud, in quantities that we take and work on as a kind of capital. He has given only one gift to meet all our need, his son Christ Jesus.

And as I look to him to live out his life in me, he will be humble and patient and loving and everything else I need in my stead. Remember the word in the first epistle of John, God gave unto us eternal life and this life is in his son. He that hath the son hath the life and he that hath not the son of God hath not the life.

The life of God is not given us as a separate item. The life of God is given us in the son. It is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Our relationship to the son is our relationship to the life. It is a blessed thing to discover the difference between Christian graces and Christ. To know the difference between meekness and Christ, between patience and Christ, between love and Christ.

Remember again what he said in 1 Corinthians 1.30. Christ Jesus was made unto us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. The common conception of sanctification is that every item of the life should be holy, but that is not holiness. It is the fruit of holiness.

Holiness is Christ. It is the Lord Jesus being made over to us to be that. So we can put in anything there, love, humility, power, self-control.

Today there is a call for patience. He is our patience. Tomorrow the call may be for purity.

He is our purity. He is the answer to every need. That is why Paul speaks of the fruit of the spirit as one and not of fruits as separate items.

God has given us his Holy Spirit and when love is needed the fruit of the spirit is love. When joy is needed the fruit of the spirit is joy. It is always true.

Doesn't matter what your personal deficiency, whether it is 101 different things, God has one sufficient answer. His Son Jesus Christ. And he is the answer to every human need.

How can we know more of Christ in this way? Only by way of an increasing awareness of need. Some are afraid to discover deficiency in themselves and so they never grow. Growth in grace is the only sense in which we can grow.

And grace, we have said, is God doing something for us. We all have the same Christ dwelling within. But revelation of some new need will lead us spontaneously to trust him to live out his life in us, in that particular.

Greater capacity means greater enjoyment of God's supply. Another letting go, a fresh trusting in Christ. And another stretch of land is conquered.

Christ my life is the secret of enlargement. We have spoken of trying and trusting and the difference between the two. Believe me, it is the difference between heaven and hell.

It is not something just to be talked over as a good thought. It is stark reality. Lord, I cannot do it, therefore I will no longer try to do it.

This is the point where most of us fail. Lord, I cannot, therefore I will take my hands off. From now I trust thee for that.

I refuse to act. I depend on him to act. And then I enter fully and joyfully into the action he initiates.

It is not passivity. It is a most active life, trusting the Lord like that, drawing life from him, taking him to be my very life, letting him live out his life in me. There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who work not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made free from the law of sin and death. It is in chapter 8 that Paul presents to us in detail the positive side of life in the spirit. There is therefore now no condemnation, he begins.

And this statement may at first seem out of place here. Surely condemnation was met by the blood, through which we found peace with God and salvation from wrath. But there are two kinds of condemnation, namely that before God and that before myself.

And the second may at times seem to us even more awful than the first. When I see that the blood of Christ has satisfied God, then I know my sins are forgiven, and there is for me no more condemnation before God. Yet I may still be knowing defeat.

And the sense of inward condemnation on this account may be very real, as Romans 7 shows. But if I have learned to live by Christ as my life, then I have learned the secret of victory, and praise God, there is therefore now no condemnation. The mind of the spirit is life and peace.

And this becomes my experience as I learn to walk in spirit. With peace in my heart I have no time to feel condemned, but only to praise him who leads me on from victory to victory. But what lay behind my sense of condemnation? Was it not the experience of defeat, and the sense of helplessness to do anything about it? Before I saw that Christ is my life, I labored under a constant sense of handicap.

Limitation dugged my steps, I felt disabled at every turn. I was always crying out, I cannot do this, I cannot do that. Try as I would, I found that I cannot please God.

But there is no I cannot in Christ. Now it is, I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me. How can Paul be so daring? On what ground does he declare that he is now free from limitation, and can do all things? Here is his answer.

For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death, Romans 8.2. Why is there now no more condemnation? For there is a reason for it. There is something definite to account for it. The reason is that there is a law called the law of the spirit of life, and it has proved stronger than another law called the law of sin and death.

God delivers us from one law by introducing another law. The law of sin and death is there all the time, but God has put another law into operation. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and that law is strong enough to deliver us from the law of sin and death.

You see, it is the law of life in Christ Jesus, the resurrection life, that in him has met death in all its forms, and triumphed over it. The law of Jesus dwells in our hearts, in the person of his Holy Spirit, and if we let him have a clear way, and commit ourselves to him, we shall find that he will keep us from the old law. We shall learn what it is to be kept, not by our own power, but by the power of God.

So Romans 8.2 speaks not of a new gift, but of the life already referred to in Romans 6.23. It is a new revelation of what we already have. I feel I cannot emphasise this too much. It is not something fresh from God's hand, but a new unveiling of what is already given.

It is a new discovery of a work already done in Christ, for the words made me free are in the past tense. If I really see this, and put my faith in him, there is no absolute necessity for Romans 7 to be repeated in me, either the experience or the conduct, and certainly not the tremendous display of willpower. If we will let go our own wills, and trust him, we shall not fall to the ground and break, but we shall fall into a different law, the law of the spirit of life.

For God has given us not only life, but a law of life. And just as the law of gravity is a natural law, and not the result of human legislation, so the law of life is a natural law, similar in principle to the law that keeps our hearts beating, or that controls the movement of our eyelids. I used to suffer from sleeplessness.

Once, after several sleepless nights, when I had prayed much about it and exhausted all my resources, I confessed at length to God that the fault must lie with me, and asked to be shown where. I said to God that I demand an explanation. His answer was, believe in nature's laws.

Sleep is as much a law as hunger is, and I realised that though I had never thought of worrying whether I would get hungry or not, I had been worrying about sleeping. I had been trying to help nature, but that is the chief trouble with most sufferers from sleeplessness. But now I trusted not only God, but God's law of nature, and slept well.

If we will let ourselves live in a new law, we shall be less conscious of the old law. It is still there, but it is no longer governing, and we are no longer in its grip. That is why the Lord says in Matthew 6, Behold the birds, consider them lilies.

If we could ask the birds whether they were afraid of the law of gravity, how would they reply? They would say, we never heard the name of Newton, we know nothing about his law. We fly because it is the law of our life to fly. Not only is there in them a life with the power of flight, but that life has a law which enables these living creatures quite spontaneously and consistently to overcome the law of gravity, yet gravity

remains.

If you get up early one morning when the cold is intense, and the snow is thick on the ground, and there is a dead sparrow in the courtyard, you are reminded at once of the persistence of that law. But while birds live, they overcome it, and the life within them is what dominates their consciousness. God has been truly gracious to us.

He has given us this new law of the spirit, and for us to fly is no longer a question of our will, but of his life. Do not be anxious, are his words, consider the lilies, they grow. He is directing our attention to the new law of life in us.

Oh for a new appreciation of the life that is ours. It is this spontaneous life that is the Christian life. It manifests itself in love for the unlovely, for the brother whom on natural ground we would not like, and certainly could not love.

It works on the basis of what the Lord sees, of the possibility in that brother. Lord, you see he is lovable, and you love him. Love him now, through me.

And it manifests itself in reality of life, in a true genuineness of moral character. There is too much hypocrisy in the life of Christians, too much play-acting. Nothing takes away from the effectiveness of Christian witness as but a pretense of something that isn't really there.

For the man in the street unfailingly penetrates such a disguise in the end, and finds us out for what we are. Yes, pretense gives way to reality, when we trust the law of life. What does it mean to walk after the spirit? It means two things.

Firstly, it is not a work, it is a walk. Praise God, the burdensome and fruitless effort I involve myself in when I sought in the flesh to please God, gives place to a blessed and restful dependence on his working, which worketh in me mightily. That is why Paul contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the spirit.

Then, secondly, to walk after implies subjection. Walking after the flesh means that I yield to the dictates of the flesh. And the following verses in Romans 8, 5-8, make clear where that leads me.

It only brings me into conflict with God. To walk after the spirit is to be subject to the spirit. There is one thing that the man who walks after the spirit cannot do, and that is be independent of him.

I must be subject to the Holy Spirit. The initiative of my life must be with him. Only as I yield myself to obey him, shall I find the law of the spirit of life in full operation, and the ordinance of the law, all that I have been trying to do to please God being fulfilled, no longer by me, but in me.

As many as are led by the spirit of God, these are sons of God. You are all familiar with the words of the benediction in 2 Corinthians 13, 14. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.

The love of God is the source of all spiritual blessing. The grace of the Lord Jesus has made it possible for that spiritual wealth to become ours, and the communion of the Holy Ghost is the means whereby it is imparted to us. Love is something hidden in the heart of God.

Grace is that love expressed and made available in the Son. Communion is the impartation of that grace by the Spirit. What the Father has devised concerning us, the Son has accomplished for us, and now the

Holy Spirit communicates it to us.

When therefore we discover something fresh that the Lord Jesus has procured for us in his cross, let us for its realisation look in the direction that God has indicated, and by our steadfast attitude of subjection and obedience to the Holy Spirit, keep wide open the way for him to impart it to us. That is his ministry. He has come for that very purpose, that he may make real in us all that is ours in Christ.

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