

Introduction:

- A. Illus.: I used to think I needed a personal trainer. You know, someone who'd get me to the gym and make sure I exercised regularly, who would put me through my paces and track my progress. If I just had a personal trainer, I thought, I'd be a different man.

Then, someone gave me a personal trainer every week for two or three months. Steve was terrific. He got me on an exercise regimen and I actually liked it. I looked forward to seeing Steve every week. He had a chart for all these different exercises I did and I liked the challenge of watching the numbers improve. Knowing I was going to see Steve every week motivated me to get to the gym in between times.

And then—no more Steve. The gift ran out. And, well, you know how it is—pretty soon I wasn't going to the gym any more. I kept that chart for quite awhile, and I'd look at it. But you know, I couldn't even remember what all those exercise names even meant after awhile. I thought of this again the other day. My neighbor, Tracy, is a personal trainer. For her 3-4 hours in a gym is glorious. I told her I'd just finished a long walk. "*Didn't it feel GREAT?*" she said. "*Ah, well, it was nice,*" I said, "*but my feet really hurt.*"

I hate to admit it, but I suspect that the only way I'll ever be real steady with exercise like that is if I had a personal trainer *in me*, if I had the *nature* of a personal trainer, like Steve or Tracy.

- B. Ever feel that way about your spiritual life? We've been studying some of the wonderful facets of the diamond-like gospel of Jesus Christ. Turn to **Rom. 8**. A couple weeks ago, when we studied Rom. 3, we rejoiced at the good news that we are made just in God's eyes by Christ. The teaching begun there leads all the way to the first vss of Rom **8:1-4...** Sometimes we hear people say to another, "*Look, I don't condemn you,*" meaning "*whom am I to judge.*" But here the point is that God has every reason to condemn us. He doesn't just look the other way. He's not just being *big*

about it. He sent Jesus to die for our sins. *That's* why there's no condemnation. Jesus was condemned for us, and when he died, he condemned the sin that was killing us.

- C. So when we put our faith in Christ we are no longer condemned by sin, but there is another benefit: We are no longer condemned to sin. **Before Jesus, we couldn't not sin.** You'd think that knowing what our good and loving God wants us to do, or not do, would be welcome news. Like "*Love one another.*" Why is that so impossibly hard? Because of our sinful nature. **V.7** here says, "*The mind governed by the flesh [our sinful nature] is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.*" It is wonderful that Jesus forgives our sin and that "*there is now no condemnation for*" us but **another great privilege of our salvation is that we are no longer governed by that self-absorbed, disobedient nature.**

Up to this point in this great book of Romans, Paul has only mentioned the Holy Spirit a couple of times, but now this chapter speaks of the Holy Spirit 18 times. One of the diamond facets of God's good news in Jesus is that when we are saved from our sin **the Holy Spirit enters into our lives to transform our thinking.** The Christian life is life in step with the Holy Spirit. Listen to the contrast in **vv.5-7...**

I. THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES US A NEW MINDSET (8:5-7)

- A. To do right God doesn't tell us to buckle down and "just do it." This is an issue of the mind—of our *thinking*. It doesn't start with willpower, which is wonderful news to the willpower-challenged! *Illus.:* The Elders were talking about our own efforts to be involved as lighthouses. One of the guys said, "*I have to admit, when I get home from spending all day with people, I'm tired. I don't feel like talking to my neighbors. Plus, our neighbors hate us. We don't know why but they just won't even talk to us.*" What should he do? He doesn't know. We didn't know. But the Holy Spirit knows. Maybe he shouldn't do anything. Maybe God's going to open a door. But our friend can get in synch with the thinking of God himself till his steps become clear.

- B. To enable us to obey God out of love, the Holy Spirit gives us the capacity to think the way he does. As Paul puts it elsewhere, “*We have the mind of Christ!*”
- Illus.: When I was a child my mom, whose name is Grace, would say to me, “*Lee Wayne, you’d better mind me.*” I suppose that phrase came from the idea that I’d better put *my* mind to the priorities on *her* mind. Our sinful nature constantly says, “*Mind me!*” But now the Holy Spirit within us—the voice of God’s Grace—says, “*Mind me. I’m your Lord now.*”
- C. We saw in **vv.6-7** that life oriented to our sinful nature is lethal.) **V.6** says, “*The mind of sinful man is death.*” **It is like having the brain and heart of the Grim Reaper.**
- D. But what a wonderful alternative the Holy Spirit gives us! He offers us a meeting of the minds—his and ours. When we *confer*—when we talk to him and seek his way of thinking—he enables us to *think* righteously, and then we do what is good and right and we do it with a godly love. Paul wrote in **Rom 12:1**, “*be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*”
- E. Do you have to be a mystic to set your mind on what the Spirit desires? Get on a mysterious holy wavelength? Not really. **You need to quietly pray and think your way through life.** “*Lord, that really ticked me off. Now what do I do?*” Then listen. “*Lord, I’m not sure how to handle my daughter’s defiance. What do you think?*” Then listen. “*Lord, I hurt so bad I don’t know what to think or do. Please help me and keep me from sin.*” Then listen and trust. The Spirit will talk to you through the Bible, through other Christians’ counsel and example, through memories of what you know. Your very instincts will be reshaped by the Holy Spirit so that you’ll *think* righteously, and when you *think* righteously you’ll *act* righteously.
- F. Illus.: I know while I’ve been talking some of you have had been thinking of an example... because you’re trekkies; fans of Star Trek. I’m not but I do my research and I learned about Dr. Spock’s extraordinary capacity to **mind**

meld. He'd put his fingertips on a person's head in just the right way, concentrate real hard, and murmur something like "*my mind to your mind, my thoughts to your thoughts.*"

As imaginative as that is, God's way is so much more wonderful. God himself, by his Holy Spirit, enters into our hearts and minds and we are in a loving relationship with him. And out of our fellowship with him—our meeting of the minds; out of prayer and reading the Bible, fellowship with other believers, and simply by being thoughtful, our minds are transformed away from all that deadened us to thinking and obedience that produces God's own *life and peace.*

That's another part of this beautiful truth:

**II. "THE MIND GOVERNED BY THE SPIRIT IS LIFE AND PEACE."
(8:6)**

- A. We saw the alternatives: death, hostility against God, inability to submit to God. Think of what those things do to your mind and heart. They are death to you. They are turmoil. **There is this huge lie that says sin is satisfying.** That greed is good. That sex outside of marriage is fun and normal. That everyone lies now and then. That evil is entertaining and you have to take care of #1. *How's that working for you?* What does that do to a soul created in the image of God? A mind created by God for nobility and love? **Disobeying God kills us inwardly and physically.** It unsettles us, confuses and darkens, it creates a moral stupidity, and people quite simply *dis-integrate*—they come apart at their spiritual seams.
- F. But when our relationship with God through the Holy Spirit enables us to adopt the mindset of the Spirit as we deal with life this verse promises "*life and peace.*" You see, Christ's life in us, by his Holy Spirit, **rejuvenates** us and brings us, even in terrible circumstances, to a quiet place of peace with God and his love for us.

Illus.: In my old Bible, I have that verse underlined in black ink and at date next to it: **9/25/83.** I remember that as

a time of great despair over my sin, a time when I felt fully the weight of Paul's cry, "*O wretched man that I am!*" And I remember coming on this verse and reading it over and over till I believed it, focused my mind again on the Holy Spirit, and found that life and peace. That's how it works, again and again, as Christ's "*life and peace*" work deeper and deeper into our lives.

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT "WILL GIVE LIFE TO YOUR MORTAL BODIES" (8:11)

- A. Even while God is renewing our minds these bodies are dying. The Holy Spirit living within us was also the force that raised Christ on Easter morning, so when our bodies die, that same mighty Spirit will flex his muscles and breathe his breath and our mortal bodies will come forth from the graves, clothed with immortality. **George Herbert** said: "*Death used to be an executioner, but the gospel has made him just a gardener.*"
- B. What will make these bodies so glorious is not that we become superheroes—X-ray vision, superhuman strength, able to leap tall buildings. Those things may be true, I don't know, but they pale in significance to the fact that these bodies will be sin-free and sick-free, that these are bodies fit for eternal life; **minds** unhindered by the lies and lunacies of this world; **hands** that will only and ever serve the Lord; **eyes** worthy of holy sight; **ears** that can bear the hymns of heaven; **tongues** that will speak only blessing, and **hearts** clean enough and big enough and loving enough to embrace the glory of God.
- C. So not only does the Holy Spirit bring our minds to life in the Lord, he will also resurrect our bodies.

There's an interesting contrast in these verses. On the one hand, we no longer face condemnation for our sin, but on the other hand we do have an obligation—a debt: **Vv.12-13...**

IV. WE ARE NO LONGER INDEBTED TO DEATH BUT TO THE SPIRIT'S LIFE (8:12-13)

- A. Do not live like a debtor to sin (vv.12-13). Your sinful nature is like a loan shark inside of you. There's a part of you that is a goon, threatening to break your kneecaps if you don't pay up—if you don't do what he wants you to do. "Look," he says, "we got a deal here, bub, and if I say, 'Sin,' you gotta sin. I own you." Do you know that voice? A temptation arises that has always owned you before, and that goon inside says, "Just like we always do it. I own you." But that's a lie now. *The Message* puts v.12 this way: "***we don't owe this old do-it-yourself life one red cent!***"

Do you see what will happen to you if you never surrender to the Spirit and always knuckle under to that old nature? "If you live according to the sinful nature, you will die." So what is the alternative?

- B. On the other hand, the Lord comes to us day in and day out and says, your sins were killing you and I've forgiven them all—past, present and future. What's more I've given you my very self—my own Spirit—to live in you; to share your feelings and thoughts, to reshape your desires to mirror mine, to think like Jesus himself. In return, your debt to me is, "***By the Spirit, put to death the misdeeds of the body.***"

Part of the Christian's life is killing the sinful practices that spring up within us. Like spiritual *Whack-a-Mole*. **John Stott** says this "*means a ruthless rejection of all practices we know to be wrong; a daily repentance, turning from all known sins of habit, practice, association or thought.*" Do you take sin that seriously in your life? It is an obligation, but it is also a wonderful gift of your salvation. You do not need to live under the vicious debt of sin and death any longer, thanks to the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

[Congregational sharing: How has the Holy Spirit brought "life and peace" to you?]