

Journey Through the Bible

A New Heart and a New Spirit

Message 8: A NEW SPIRIT (4): Exercising Our Spirit and Walking according to the Spirit

Outline:

- I. **We need to exercise our spirit so that we may receive the Lord more; then we can live a godly life to manifest God—1 Tim. 4:7:**
 - A. Godliness is Christ lived out of us to be the manifestation of God; today this very Christ is the Spirit dwelling in our spirit; hence, to exercise ourselves unto godliness is to exercise our spirit to live Christ in our daily life—v. 7, footnote 4:
 1. The word in Greek for exercise is the basis of the English word gymnastics; to participate in gymnastics, one must use all his energy to exercise his whole physical being; we must exercise our spirit in the same way.
 2. The exercise unto godliness is profitable for all the things of this present life and the coming life (v. 8); the exercise unto godliness here is actually the exercise of our spirit.
 - B. Our spirit needs to be stirred up—Ezra 1:1, 5:
 1. Ezra 1:5 says that God stirred up the spirit of a remnant of Israelites to go up to build His house in Jerusalem; our spirit needs to be stirred up for God's interest—cf. Exo. 35:21.
 2. We should not wait for others to stir up our spirit; instead, we should stir up our spirit by exercising our spirit—2 Tim. 1:6-7.
 3. On the one hand, the Lord is the One who stirs our spirit up, but we should not be passive; we ourselves have to cooperate with the Lord to stir up our spirit—cf. Isa. 64:7a; Jude 19-21, and footnote 2 of v. 19.
 - II. **We need to walk according to our spirit because today the Holy Spirit is within our spirit and is even one with our spirit; the Christian walk, the Christian life, the Christian activity, is not according to the standard of good and bad, but absolutely according to the spirit—Rom. 8:4, 16; 1 Cor. 6:17:**
 - A. Our Christian life is according to the spirit, and we know the spirit by the inner sense of life and peace—Rom. 8:4, 6:
 1. The feeling of death includes weakness, emptiness, uneasiness, restlessness, depression, dryness, darkness, and pain.
 2. The feeling of life and peace includes strength, satisfaction, peace, rest, release, liveliness, watering, brightness, and comfort.
 - B. When we walk according to our spirit, spontaneously we walk according to the Holy Spirit, because the two spirits are one—v. 4; Gal. 5:16, 25:
 1. In our daily living as Christians, we need to have two kinds of walk by the Spirit.
 2. The first is a general walk, our habitual and common daily walk; the Greek word for this kind of walk is peripateo, which means to have our being, to deport ourselves, to order our manner of life, to walk about—v. 16.
 3. The second is the walk according to a certain rule or principle for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose; the Greek word for this kind of walk is stoicheo, which means to walk in line; to fulfill God's purpose and to reach His goal, we must have this second kind of walk—v. 25.
- Focus:** We need to continually exercise ourselves unto godliness by exercising our spirit, taking the initiative to cooperate with the Lord to stir our spirit up, and we need to walk according to the mingled spirit for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose.

READING EXCERPT

The Exercise of Our Spirit for Godliness

First Timothy 4:7-8 says, "The profane and old-womanish myths refuse, and exercise yourself unto godliness. For bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the present life and of that which is to come." The exercise unto godliness is profitable for all the things of this present life and the coming life.

In the New Testament there are a number of seeming contradictions. Actually, of course, they are not contradictions. On the one hand, the New Testament reveals that we should not have our own works. We should not do things in ourselves either to participate in God's blessing or to accomplish something for God's purpose. But on the other hand, the New Testament uses a strong word such as exercise. In Colossians Paul says that he labored, toiled, fought, and struggled in an agonizing way (1:29; 2:1). These words are stronger words showing something that is very difficult to do. We all need to see these two aspects. Our not doing anything means that we should not do anything by our flesh, by ourselves, or by our natural life. But on the positive side we have to labor, to travail, and to struggle in our spirit. Actually, the exercise of our spirit comprises and implies all these words: labor, toil, struggle, wrestle, and fight.

Today whatever we do positively in our spirit is a kind of exercise. The word in Greek for exercise is the basis of the English word gymnastics. To participate in gymnastics, one must use all his energy to exercise his whole physical being. We must exercise our spirit in the same way. The whole environment around us does not help us to exercise. It has an intention to keep us down. The whole situation does not help us to go on to labor. It helps us to be lazy; it helps us to be backsliding. It is a downhill current. The downhill current helps us go down. Actually, the current carries you. But if you go uphill, you have to exercise, and you have to struggle.

The Lord is with our spirit, but we have to respond, to cooperate, by exercising our spirit. The air is with us, but we have to breathe in the air to enjoy it. The air can be enjoyed by us continuously because we have a breathing organ to get the benefit of the air. In the same way, the Lord, the Spirit, is with us, but we need to exercise our spirit, our breathing organ, to breathe in the Lord as our spiritual air (John 20:22). If our spirit is not exercised, we cannot receive His benefit. The Lord being with our spirit surely implies the exercise of our spirit.

The Christian Life according to the Spirit

The Christian life is a life absolutely according to the spirit. It is not according to any reasons, any teachings, or any standard of right or wrong, good or bad, worldly or holy. Our Christian life is according to the spirit, and we know the spirit by the inner sense of life and peace.

If I come to a place to minister the Word, it is quite possible for me to speak in my self and by myself. If I am speaking the word of God and for God and yet I am speaking by my self, I will sense the emptiness, dissatisfaction, and dryness within. The Christian walk, the Christian life, the Christian activity, is not according to the standard of good or bad, but absolutely according to the spirit. If we would know this one thing and be ruled and controlled by it, the Lord would transform our inward being and our daily life.

Do not argue with the inner sense of life and peace. Do not say that something is good, scriptural, or holy. Do not reason and do not argue that what you are doing is for the gospel or for the church. The test is—do you have the inner sense of life and peace? The more you reason with this sense, the more you argue, the more you will sense death within you. We can know the

spirit just by this inner sense. If we are going to differentiate the spirit and the soul, we must deny the rational mind, emotion, and will all the time and take care of the inner sense.

Questions:

1. What is godliness and how does it relate to the exercise of our spirit?
2. Discuss what it means to know the spirit by the inner sense of life and peace. Give some examples related to your experience.

Scripture Reading:

1 Tim. 4:7 But the profane and old-womanish myths refuse, and exercise yourself unto godliness.

Ezra 1:5 Then the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites rose up, even everyone whose spirit God had stirred up to go up to build the house of Jehovah, which is in Jerusalem.

2 Tim. 1:6 For which cause I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

2 Tim. 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness.

Rom. 12:11 Do not be slothful in zeal, but be burning in spirit, serving the Lord.

Rom. 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.

Rom. 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

Gal. 5:16 But I say, Walk by the Spirit and you shall by no means fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Gal. 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

1 Tim. 4:8 For bodily exercise is profitable for a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the present life and of that which is to come.

Isa. 64:7 And there is no one who calls upon Your name, / Who stirs himself up to lay hold of You; / For You have hidden Your face from us / And have consumed us by our iniquities.

1 Cor. 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.