**Life in the Spirit**

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A few years ago, *ABC News* reported on some bad habits that drain your energy.[[1]](#footnote-1) Here is the list of things that will drain your energy in life: skipping exercise, not drinking enough water, not consuming enough iron, being a perfectionist, blowing things out of proportion, skipping breakfast, eating too much junk food, having trouble saying ‘no,’ having a messy office, working through vacation, checking your email right before going to bed, relying on caffeine to get through the day and staying up too late on the weekends. These are some of the little things that we do (or don’t do) that can exhaust us physically and mentally and drain our energy.

There is something else that drains us. Paul says that life in the flesh is life-draining. Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what drives that nature, a desire that eventually leads to death. Just like some of the things that drain energy from your life can seem like a good idea, sin often is enticing and takes on the façade of life-giving.

For example, skipping a workout when you are tired seemingly makes sense. Why go exert more energy when you need to conserve energy? Yet, studies have shown that regular exercise helps people to be less fatigued and more energized than being sedentary. It boosts metabolism, increases strength and endurance and jump-starts the heart rate.

Similarly, sin is attractive. If it weren’t, we wouldn’t struggle with it so much! Yet, it never satisfies. Many of our sins are the result of disordered natural desires. The desire for food is natural and good, but when it becomes the primary focus it becomes gluttony. The desire to feel affirmation for who we are and what we do is natural and good, but when it is a constant need it becomes pride and conceit. Desire becomes sin when it moves from being something we enjoy to something we seek as our main motive.

That is where we find grace. Today, we finish up our series on “What is Grace?” as we determine what it means to live in God’s Spirit. Paul says there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus because the Spirit sets us free from the laws of sin and death. The intention of the Judaic Laws was to give life to the Israelites. The Laws were designed to help the Israelites to be in right relationship with God and keep their eyes focused on him. But over time, the laws revealed all of the ways the Israelites failed to live up to the standards set for them. Rather than being life-giving, the 613 laws became life-draining.

Then came Jesus. Jesus changed everything. He did not abolish the laws. Rather he fulfilled them. Therefore, when we are in Christ, the Spirit within us is alive because of the righteousness in Christ. “And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in us, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give us life to our mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in us!” (v. 11) Paul is saying that we can’t ever forget our identity. We are alive in Christ. We are God’s beloved in whom Christ dwells and we live in the unshakeable kingdom of God! Why live life enslaved to sin when we can choose life in the Spirit? So, friends, choose life in the Spirit!

First, **we are set free in the Spirit**. I guess before we can be set free, we have to determine how we are enslaved. Paul says, “Those who are controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.” (v. 8) When we live according to our fleshly desires, we are slaves to sin. When we are slaves to sin, we are no longer in control. The sin in us controls our thoughts, our attitudes, our desires and our actions. But when the Spirit sets us free, our spirit is connected to the Holy Spirit. Then, the Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirit, reminding us who we are; children of God in whom he is well pleased – not because of our performance or accomplishments, our holiness or virtue, but because we are sacred beings of invaluable worth!

We are set free because of the life, death and the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus, being God, came to earth to show us how to live. He showed us how to live with love, compassion, forgiveness and grace. Jesus showed us how to put the needs of others before our own. Jesus showed us the true meaning of sacrifice by taking on our sins upon him on the cross. He bled and died, not for his own sins but for ours. Then in his resurrection, he conquered sin and death once and for all. Sin no longer has power over us. We have been set free! We’ve been set free to live in the Spirit!

Not only have we been set free, when we live in the Spirit, the **Holy Spirit moves us from selfish-thinking to Spirit-thinking**. We are free to make good choices now; in a way that we could not when sin was in control of our lives. Here is how I would paraphrase verse 5: Those who live only for themselves are going to be driven only by the things they want. So they are going to be selfish and greedy with low standards. But those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit -- things such as service to others, love, life and peace.

Of course, we're always going to face temptation, and we'll mess up because our flesh is weak. But sin no longer has the ability to control us because we've embraced *a new way of thinking* that immediately understands the problem or issues when we falter.

In the past I lied because I thought it helped me get what I want. In truth, it made me feel ashamed and it fractured my relationships. Now I tell the truth because God provides what I need and I respect people and value my relationships enough not to lie to them. In the past, I tried to manage the way people thought about me by putting a false self out for others to see. Now, I find my identity in Christ. In the past, I sought affirmation of others by what I accomplished or how hard I worked. Now, I seek the glorify God. In the past, I worked to get ahead for all of the selfish reasons. Now, I work for the kingdom of God. In the past, I struggled with anger and self-doubt. Now, I know God loves me unconditionally.

I have a new nature. It no longer needs to sin. Matter of fact, it cannot run on sin as it once did when it knew no better. I am different from the person I once was before I became a follower of Jesus. The Bible calls it "walking according to the Spirit," or setting "our minds on the things of the Spirit." Those "things" are "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). I am a new creation and I have a new way of thinking!

Finally, **life in the Spirit is life-giving**. God fills us with a power that is described as both the "Spirit of God" and the "Spirit of Christ" (v. 9). This fresh source of energy gives us new life, because it is the same Spirit that brought Jesus back to life.

You see, when we live life in the Spirit, we have access to the supernatural power of Jesus. We may not have the power to heal someone from cancer or set someone free from addiction but we do have the power to change people’s lives by loving them and showing them compassion. We have the power to change people’s lives by pointing them to the cross of Jesus and by modeling the sacrificial attitude of Christ. We have the power to change the world through the supernatural power of the Spirit.

When we try to live life to satisfy our own selfish desires, it is life-draining. It takes everything out of us to live life for ourselves. There is no hope because we realize the only way to keep up the charade is to work harder and longer. But when we live life in the Spirit, we know that we live through God’s power. We have access to the power of the One who created the universe, who set all things in motion and the One who loves us unconditionally.

Just before the Israelites were to enter into the Promised Land, Moses gave them a final charge. God had already told Moses that he was not going to be the one to lead his people into the land of milk and honey. Joshua was appointed as the new leader. In his final address to his people, Moses spoke these words to the Israelites. It is also a good reminder to us.

*11 Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. 12 It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, “Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” 13 Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, “Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” 14 No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.*

*15 See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. 16 For I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.*

*17 But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, 18 I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.*

*19 This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live 20 and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. (Deuteronomy 30:11-20)*

1. "14 Bad Habits That Drain Your Energy." ABC News. Accessed August 29, 2017. http://abcnews.go.com/Health/Wellness/14-bad-habits-drain-energy/story?id=24032270. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)