

Sunday, July 9, 2017

Forest Hills United Methodist Church

Message: “Winning the Inner War”

Rev. Dr. David Werner

Message Series: The Holy Spirit in Daily Life

Source: <https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/life-in-the-spirit-dennis-davidson-sermon-on-holy-spirit-in-believers-109107>

Scripture: Romans 8:1-18

Text: Galatians 5:17 “A person’s selfish desires are set against the Spirit, and the Spirit is set against one’s selfish desires. They are opposed to each other, so you shouldn’t do whatever you want to do.” (CEB)

Blurb: Do you know that inner tension between selfishness and what is right? The Bible talks about it as the war between the flesh and the spirit. How do we, in normal daily life, push back the selfishness? There is good news! God has given us the Holy Spirit within us to make us able to do the right thing! This Sunday we’ll discover how we can win the inner battle!

Gathering Song: *Holy, Holy, Holy*

Welcome: -Pastor David

Worship Set: Sanctify

Fill My Heart

Chainbreaker

Have It All

Worship Prayer - Andrew

Kids invited to Kids’ Church

Annual Conference Reflections: -Amanda Lucas

Prayers: -Andrew

Commissioning of Wildfire Mission Team: -Andrew

The Lord’s Prayer

Offering: *Jubilee* - Sanctify

Sermon Bumper

Message: “Winning the Inner War”

PP#1: Winning the Inner War

“A person’s selfish desires are set against the Spirit, and the Spirit is set against one’s selfish desires. They are opposed to each other, so you shouldn’t do whatever you want to do.” - Galatians 5:17

The Holy Spirit in our daily lives. Winning the Inner War. Galatians 5:17 “A person’s selfish desires are set against the Spirit, and the Spirit is set against one’s selfish desires. They are opposed to each other, so you shouldn’t do whatever you want to do.”

PP#2: *Image for knowledge is power.*

Knowledge is *not* power. Yes, knowledge helps us be able to direct our power in the right way. But *knowing* better doesn’t mean *doing* better.

I am a living proof of this. You see, I have a scale in my bathroom . . . and it works perfectly. It gives me accurate information. I know what it says, and what that means.

I have a doctor. He is very knowledgeable, and he is very good at communicating the situation of my physical health to me.

I know what being overweight does to my aging body. I know the prognosis of likely future complications, and the higher risk I carry, as my father died of heart failure.

Yet I also know for a fact that Kwik Trip had six glazed doughnuts on sale this past week for \$1.99!

And I’m also smart enough to know that cheap doughnuts are actually very expensive if you consider the future cost of medical treatment for obesity.

I am very informed! And I can tell you, knowledge is *not* power.

I also find it exceptionally ironic that the quote “knowledge is power” is attributed to Francis Bacon. *Bacon*? We know that there is absolutely nothing redeemable about bacon. It just tastes so dang good!

PP#3: *Image of bacon on a doughnut.*

Most of the time, we know better. But that doesn’t mean we act or behave better. We’re now putting bacon on our doughnuts!

Our daily experience is that we struggle between what we *know* is right, and *doing* what is right. Paul admits in Romans 7 that he doesn’t do what he wants to do, but instead he does what he doesn’t want to do. (7:15) There’s a war going on inside!

That’s true for all of us. This is your lived experience, too, right? So, how do we win this inner battle in our daily lives?

PP#4: Romans 8:1-17 (CEB)

1 So now there isn’t any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. 3 God has done what was impossible for the Law, since it was weak because of selfishness. God condemned sin in the body by sending His own Son to deal with sin in the same body as humans, who are controlled by sin. 4 He did this so that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us.

This is why Jesus left and went back to heaven. Jesus came to save us from our sins, and put us right with God. He is our Savior and Lord. But to walk with Him, in our day-to-day lives, to win that inner struggle, we need extra help.

And so, Jesus went back to heaven, and God sent the Holy Spirit to us. We have an inner struggle, and we need an inner God. God came to us in the Father, teaching us right and good and love and life. God came to us in the Son to conquer sin and death and earn us forgiveness and life abundant and eternal. But our God also came to us in the Holy Spirit, to transform us from the inside out.

Turn to Romans 8. It's a hefty passage, filled with lots of themes of salvation. But I want you to notice, as we look at it, how it is the Holy Spirit that creates in us transformed lives.

Verse 1 is good news for Christians. "So now there isn't any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. [This verse is a keeper. When we choose Jesus, we are forgiven! Verse 2] The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. [When we are in Christ Jesus, we have the Spirit of Life! Here's the good news of the Holy Spirit!] 3 God has done what was impossible for the Law, since it was weak because of selfishness. [God gave us the law in Scripture to teach us right and wrong. But that knowledge didn't fix us. Why? Because of our selfish bent! This inner leaning of ours needs help! Selfishness is broken in us when we choose Jesus: we no longer are slaves to our selfishness. Now we have a choice, thanks to Jesus.] God condemned [dealt with] sin in the body [fleshly desires] by sending His own Son to deal with sin in the same body as humans, who are controlled by sin. He did this so that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us."

Jesus became a human with a body so He could break the selfish power of body, the flesh, carnal, worldly. We still have that desire, but we no longer have to follow it. We can live differently.

PP#5: Romans 8:1-17 (CEB)

Now the way we live is based on the Spirit, not based on selfishness. 5 People whose lives are based on selfishness think about selfish things, but people whose lives are based on the Spirit think about things that are related to the Spirit. 6 The attitude that comes from selfishness leads to death, but the attitude that comes from the Spirit leads to life and peace. 7 So the attitude that comes from selfishness is hostile to God. It doesn't submit to God's Law, because it can't. 8 People who are self-centered aren't able to please God.

The last part of verse 4 "Now the way we live is based on the Spirit, not based on selfishness." There's the two sides of our inner war: Selfishness and Spirit. God gives us His Spirit to fight against the selfishness within us, and make us able to do what is right.

PP#6: Winning the Inner War

1. The Holy Spirit empowers you to do the right thing

Righteousness, by the way, in the Bible, simply means *doing the right thing*. It's not knowing the right thing. It's living the right way. And we can do that because of what Jesus did, and because the Holy Spirit within us empowers us to choose it, and do it!

PP#7: Romans 8:1-17 (CEB)

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Verse 5, "People whose lives are based on selfishness think about selfish things, but people whose lives are based on the Spirit think about things that are related to the Spirit."

OK, stop here a moment. I started off by saying that knowledge isn't power. But look here: it is still a battle of the mind. It's not *information* that is power. It's the choosing to *focus* on what is right. *Thinking about such things*. This is not gaining more knowledge. It is a concentration on what is good.

PP#8: Winning the Inner War

1. The Holy Spirit empowers you to do the right thing
2. Focus your mind on what is right

All over Scripture there is the urging to train our mind correctly. Isaiah 26:3 "You will keep Him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You." Philipians 4:8 "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things and the God of peace will be with you." Colossians 3:2 "Think about the things above and not things on earth." Philipians 2:5 "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." You get the point.

It's a *focus* of your mind. So, here's a very basic checkpoint: What in your daily lives gives you capacity to think on things above? What do you do that creates space for this focus? Here's where daily devotions comes in, Bible reading, prayer. But also noticing the good in others, giving God thanks for little things throughout the day, for conversations with others that point to God in some way. We fill much of our lives with entertaining distractions...did you catch that word? Distractions. Harmless though video games, or Facebook, or TV or online shopping may be, do we allow them to become distractions for our focus on God? Simple step today: tilt the inner war in your favor by choosing less easy relaxers, and a little more focus.

PP#9: Daily Bible Verse

1. Choose it in the morning
2. Reflect on it while going to work
3. Review it when you eat lunch
4. Share it with someone during the afternoon
5. Reflect on it while traveling home
6. Share it with someone when you get home.
7. Pray it when you go to bed

Do this: choose a Bible verse in the morning, and focus your mind on it throughout the day. Make 7 points to remember it: choose it when you get up, review it when you go to work, when you break for lunch, tell it to someone when you go for your 3 o'clock stretch, review it on your way home, share it with someone when you are home, either in person, or text or something, and then use it in your prayer at night when you go to bed. Just a little, simple, seven-step focus of a Bible verse.

PP#10: Romans 8:1-17 (CEB)

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Verse 6, "The attitude that comes from selfishness leads to death, but the attitude that comes from the Spirit leads to life and peace. So the attitude that comes from selfishness is hostile to God. It doesn't submit to God's Law, because it can't. People who are self-centered aren't able to please God."

Attitude—there's that focus again—of selfishness brings death. But an attitude that is open to the Holy Spirit working within us, opens the path of rich life and deep peace. It's when we align our spirits—our focus—with the Holy Spirit within us, that we experience that inner transformation, that tilt away from selfishness to right living, a lived righteousness.

PP#11: Romans 8:1-17 (CEB)

9 But you aren't self-centered. Instead you are in the Spirit, if in fact God's Spirit lives in you. If anyone doesn't have the Spirit of Christ, they don't belong to him. 10 If Christ is in you, the Spirit is your life because of God's righteousness, but the body is dead because of sin. 11 If the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, the One who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your human bodies also, through His Spirit that lives in you.

Verse 9, "But you aren't self-centered. Instead you are in the Spirit, if in fact God's Spirit lives in you. If anyone doesn't have the Spirit of Christ, they don't belong to him. If Christ is in you, the Spirit is your life because of God's righteousness, but the body is dead because of sin." When you have Jesus, you have the Spirit, who brings life and puts to death the selfishness of the body. Verse 11, "If the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, the One who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your human bodies also, through His Spirit that lives in you."

We have life in our daily, walking-around bodies, righteousness, winning the struggle of the inner war, through His Spirit living in us. We can't do it on our own, but we are not on our own. We have the Holy Spirit within us.

PP#12: Romans 8:1-17 (CEB)

12 So then, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but it isn't an obligation to ourselves to live our lives on the basis of selfishness. 13 If you live on the basis of selfishness, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live.

Verse 12, "So then, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but it isn't an obligation to ourselves to live our lives on the basis of selfishness. If you live on the basis of selfishness, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live."

Here's where the truth the Bible reveals is so radical. Our inner self screams out constantly to be followed. My convenience. My ease. My anger. My being offended. My time. Me first. My way. The way I understand. The way it makes sense to me. This is right. Do that. Me.

But it takes a willful choice to let the Holy Spirit take the lead. Those summer plans, how can you be willing to give up what you want to do, in order to let someone else have their way? Or deciding ahead of time that you are going to like someone, even though he's so annoying? Or keeping some money in your pocket to give away? What would it look like for you to live into your obligation not to be selfish? It's radical, because what is best for us is when we are not selfish!

PP#13: Winning the Inner War

1. The Holy Spirit empowers you to do the right thing
2. Focus your mind on what is right
3. Align your will with the Spirit's will
4. Mark the deaths of specific selfish desires

In this inner war, there needs to be casualties. You must put to death your selfish desires. It's a willful decision. It's hard, and painful. Death always is. But to grow into the new life, we need to mark the deaths of those things we put away. We need to say it out loud. "I will not let my anger make my decisions. I will treat that person differently next time. That anger is dead. Good riddance!" "I will make room for that annoying person. I will choose to like her. I will speak graciously to her. That irritation is dead. Good riddance!" "I will not spend all my money on what I want. I will choose to give away 10% of my income before I do anything else. My addiction to spending is dead. It will not determine my actions any longer."

Speaking it out loud creates room in your heart for the Holy Spirit to fight on your behalf. Name it, over and over again, whenever you feel the temptation. Let the Holy Spirit fight for you. His power is sufficient. He brings life.

PP#14: Romans 8:1-17 (CEB)

14 All who are led by God's Spirit are God's sons and daughters. 15 You didn't receive a spirit of slavery to lead you back again into fear, but you received a Spirit that shows you are adopted as His children. With this Spirit, we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The same Spirit agrees with our spirit, that we are God's children. 17 But if we are children, we are also heirs. We are God's heirs and fellow heirs with Christ, if we really suffer with Him so that we can also be glorified with Him.

One more point. Verse 14, "All who are led by God's Spirit are God's sons and daughters. You didn't receive a spirit of slavery to lead you back again into fear, but you received a Spirit that shows you are adopted as His children. With this Spirit, we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The same Spirit agrees with our spirit, that we are God's children. But if we are children, we are also heirs. We are God's heirs and fellow heirs with Christ, if we really suffer with Him so that we can also be glorified with Him."

PP#15: Winning the Inner War

1. The Holy Spirit empowers you to do the right thing
2. Focus your mind on what is right
3. Align your will with the Spirit's will
4. Mark the deaths of specific selfish desires
5. Rest in your identity as God's child

Rest in your identity as God's child. His Spirit within you affirms to you that you belong to God. Talk to God as Father, as Dad. His Spirit within us, affirms to our spirits, that we are His. Rest in that. We have the inheritance of walking *with* Jesus, and walking *like* Jesus. We are given, from God, the power over our selfishness. We have it because He has it, and He passes it on to us, through His Spirit within us.

So, the next time you're feeling overwhelmed, or hopeless, or overpowered, or trapped in your inner struggle, tap into the Holy Spirit within you. Set your mind on what is right. Give over your will to the Spirit's will. Name the death of that power against you. And rest in your identity as God's kid.

We live daily with the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit wins the inner struggle for us.

On Friday my extended family went to Jamestown, North Dakota, to see the Werner family farm one last time before it is sold. We met in Fargo, at a gas station. I had driven for four hours, and I was glad to get out and stretch. A guy filling gas two cars over was getting grilled by the person next to him. I don't know what it was really about, but the angry guy did all the talking. He was waving his hands and red in the face. Yet the guy filling the gas remained calm. He nodded from time to time, and I heard him apologize a couple of times. I was curious, but glad I wasn't involved.

When I went in to use the bathroom and pay for the gas, the calm guy was right in front of me. I asked him if he was OK. He said, "No big deal. Just a little misunderstanding. He thought I cut him off back there on the interstate."

I couldn't help myself. "Did you?" I asked.

"No, and I couldn't have." He said. "We came in from opposite directions! But I couldn't convince him. Oh well. No big deal."

"Wow," I said, "That probably would have made me mad. I see you have a fish on your car."

"Yeah," he said, "Trying to live the talk."

We were now inside the gas station, and it occurred to me that I was now the one in front. He had held the door for me! As I slipped into the bathroom—after four hours I really couldn't stand around and talk!—I glanced back. I saw him let someone else with a doughnut cut in line in front of him.

Wow, living the talk. He was righteous! But it wasn't his good nature that let him remain calm. It was the Holy Spirit within him that he let guide his day. And you know what? How much happier he was than the guy who accused him wrongly. He was still mad, and having a sour day. But this guy was having a great day.

Winning the inner war. In the end, we are the ones who win!

Amen.

Closing Song: *I Come with Joy* Sanctify

Benediction: Pastor David