



Theme: A Better Life in the Holy Spirit

"Life in the Spirit"



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Weekly Memory Verse:

11 The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you. Romans 8:11

Meditation Moments for Monday, September 15 – **Read Romans 5:1-5.** The Holy Spirit was a major subject for the apostle Paul. The Hebrew for the Spirit of God is the word *rûah* which we find around 90 times in our Old Testament. Compare that to the Greek word *pneuma* that Paul uses to describe God's Spirit more than 115 times in his letters, which are much shorter than the Hebrew Bible. We cannot study all those verses in this week's Meditation Moments, but we can learn many of the Paul's major teachings about the Holy Spirit this week. We are reminded in today's reading that emotions are volatile. As we follow Jesus, we don't always **feel** "the love of God has been poured out in our hearts." Even reformers like Martin Luther or John Wesley felt "down" at times. The Scriptures teach us not how we make our way up the summit by getting grace and then topping it off with love and good works. Scripture is the story of how God came down to meet us while we were broken and unable to climb the mountain on our own. The apostle Paul said the Holy Spirit's presence fills our hearts with the reality of God's love, no matter how we feel.



Paul said the Holy Spirit pours God's love into our hearts. This divine presence is a gift to all believers, helping us experience God's love in a personal way. How aware are you of the Holy Spirit's work in your life? Can you recall a time when

you felt particularly guided or comforted by the Spirit? How might actively seeking the Spirit's presence change your daily walk with God?



Paul twice used forms of the Greek verb *kauchaomai* in Romans 5. In verse 2, the *Common English Bible* renders it, "we boast in the hope of God's glory." Verse 3 reads, "We even *take pride* in our problems," which may be even harder to believe. In both spots, the verb implied "to rejoice, be very happy." Has the movement Paul described from trouble to endurance, to character, to hope ever helped lead you to trust that the Holy Spirit has "poured out" divine love in your heart?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for your willingness to die for me before I was even born, and to draw my heart to you. And thank you for sending the Holy Spirit to guide me into your kind of life. Amen.

Tuesday, September 16 – Read **Romans 8:1-5 and 22-27**. When the apostle Paul dictated this letter, he did **not** pause after Romans 7:25 and say, "Chapter 8." In the early 1200's, the Archbishop of Canterbury Stephen Langton came up with a new way to subdivide the books of the Bible using chapters to make them more readable. Romans 8:1 was not a new subject, but the result of Jesus' salvation laid out in Romans 7:24-25. Paul contrasted a life which revolved around the self, which in the Greek was called, "*life in the flesh*," and a life the Holy Spirit directed towards God. Biblical scholar N.T. Wright wrote in his commentary *Paul for Everyone: 2 Corinthians*, "When Paul uses the word 'flesh'... he does not intend us simply to think of the 'physical' world... 'flesh' refers to people or things who share the corruptibility, mortality and rebellion of the world... 'Spirit', by contrast, usually refers to God's own spirit, the holy spirit." Paul saw the Spirit as a constant companion, connecting us with God even when we're not sure what to say or how to pray.




In Romans 8:3, Paul wrote that God sent "his own Son to deal with sin." Moralistic religion often deepens guilt by implying it's **your** job to "deal with sin" on your own. He also said in 8:26-27 that when you feel overwhelmed or unsure how to pray, the Spirit "pleads your case." How might acknowledging the Holy Spirit's presence give you greater peace and confidence when you face difficult situations or moments of uncertainty in your daily life?




In Romans 8:23, Paul called the Holy Spirit the "first crop of the harvest." Elsewhere he called the Holy Spirit the Greek word *arrabōn*, which literally means a "down payment." Paul tells us that when God anoints someone with the spirit, this is the first part of the gift which will be completed in the resurrection itself. If our hope is founded on the resurrection of Jesus, that hope becomes a real possession within us through God's gift of the spirit. Can you trust that every good life change the Spirit brings is a "down payment" on your eternal resurrection life with God?

Prayer: Gracious God, how I look forward to eternity with you. Thank you that your presence with me in the Holy Spirit lets me begin to "taste" what that glorious eternity will be like. Amen.


Wednesday, September 17 – Read **Romans 14:13-19 and 15:7-16**. Romans is sent to a group of smaller “house churches” in Rome according to Paul’s words in Romans 16:5, 10, and 15. Paul named the central truth of God’s kingdom in just a 3-part phrase: “God’s kingdom is... about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.” God’s kingdom is about living in peace and lifting each other up, not about winning arguments.


 We may not debate food laws or Sabbath observance today, but we DO differ, often strongly, about abortion, immigration, how God views human sexuality, what “the Bible is inspired” means, and maybe even church music! Paul said, “Stop judging each other.” Was that a “low” rule, one even a woman taken in adultery or a thief on a cross could pass, or in fact a tough, “high” standard? Which challenges you more: the “height” or the “lowness” of Paul’s standard?

 As God’s people focus their spiritual walk on “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit,” Paul said they can stop sniping at one another. N.T. Wright in his commentary on Romans, *Paul for Everyone*, notes that, “In 14:14-16, he asked the ‘progressives’ (like him) to recognize that there are [some] occasions when they need to hold back from this freedom for the sake of those whose Christian faith would be irreparably damaged by such behavior.” How can you use your God-given freedom in ways that bless others, not just to enhance your own life?

Prayer: Lord God, only you are wise enough to judge each person’s thoughts and heart intentions. Help me release the urge to judge others, and instead to seek to show all people your peace and love. Amen.


Thursday, September 18 – Read **1 Corinthians 6:12-20**. In the apostle Paul’s day, the Greek city of Corinth was very rich and VERY immoral. Scholar William Barclay in his commentary *The Letters to the Corinthians*, wrote “the very word *Korinthiazesthai*, to live like a Corinthian, had become a part of the Greek language, and meant to live with drunken and immoral debauchery.” Paul told believers there that saving sex for committed relationships, which Greeks and Romans seldom did, was a worthy aim. He based that on a principle that involved much more than sex: “your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you.”


 Every night in Corinth, historians estimate 100 to 1000 “sacred” prostitutes from Aphrodite’s Temple, built to the Greek goddess of “love,” sold sexual favors. There are clear differences, but how are today’s culture and views like Corinth’s? Paul taught 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 that in a sexual relationship, each person should actively seek their partner’s good, not just their own pleasure. How can the Holy Spirit guide you to live God’s way, even when the world around you pulls in different directions?

 The image of your body being a temple of the Holy Spirit is both empowering and challenging. It invites you to seriously consider how you live in and through your physical self. What’s one area of your life where you could more fully honor God with your body? In what ways can knowing that God desires to dwell in you and guide you all the time help you think more clearly about your body, and make better choices about what you do with it?

Prayer: King Jesus, make all of me—body, mind and heart—a temple where your Holy Spirit dwells. Remodel me from the inside out in your beautiful holy image. Amen.


Friday, September 19 – Read **Ephesians 4:1-13**. First century or twenty-first, every group deals with tension and conflict for one simple reason: we are different. Today's passage didn't ignore differences. It did say that as different as we are, we can find and preserve "the unity of the Spirit." It listed no fewer than **seven** "ones" that unite God's people and then ended in verse 6 with three "alls." Unity isn't an optional convenience achieved by human effort, but an essential gift from God through the Holy Spirit.

 Can you see the ways that the differences between people, when valued and respected, bring depth and strength, even when they pose challenges? How can valuing and celebrating the strength that grows from differences help to keep you from building walls of separation that destroy relationships? The passage said one key to helping each other grow is "speaking the truth in love." Which do you find harder with others: speaking the truth at all, or doing so in love?

 It takes "effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit." The Holy Spirit leads but does not force. We read about "suppressing the Spirit," and 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20 says we can "brush off" Spirit-inspired messages. Destroying unity makes the Spirit "unhappy" according to Ephesians 4:29-31. We learn in Paul's writings that the Spirit is unhappy when believers speak destructive words about others and when people divide against one another. How can you value and preserve the Holy Spirit's gift of unity in all your contacts?

Prayer: Holy Spirit, make me the kind of person who always speaks the truth, but who only speaks it in love. Guide me to listen in that spirit as well as speak, to preserve your precious gift of unity. Amen.

Saturday, September 20 – Read **Galatians 5:16-24**. In the first-century Roman Empire, many believed a good life meant "do whatever feels good at the moment." They viewed the actions and qualities the apostle Paul listed in Galatians 5:19-21 as part of, or at least side-effects of, having "fun." They called it "hedonism," which is a general term for conduct that is about self-pleasure of one kind or another. It's still popular today. The apostle Paul rebuffed hedonism but also rejected the idea of other philosophers and religious teachers who said the key to a good life was simply self-righteous "goodness." He said in Galatians 3:6-11, "all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse," meaning it was more than just good works. The real key, he said, is not following a set of laws, but the Holy Spirit working within you. The Holy Spirit, rather than your own selfish wishes, literally "flesh" in Greek, will direct and shape your life. He expressed the results of the Spirit's guidance with the metaphor of "fruit" borne from inner reality, not outward effort.

 Compare the qualities listed as the results of following "your selfish desires" in verses 19-21 with the "fruit of the Spirit" in verses 22-23. Do you agree that the fruit of the Spirit produces a better quality of life than the preceding list? If so,

remember that the nine qualities Paul lists in verses 22–23 are not things which, if we try hard enough, we could simply do without help, without the spirit. Which of the traits the Holy Spirit offers to grow in you are already most present? Which of them do you most want the Spirit's power to grow in you? With gentle irony, and deep seriousness, Paul followed his list of the fruit of the Spirit with the phrase, "There is no law against things like this." Why would God (or you) make a law against qualities that make life so much better? When have you let go of your own agenda, and found that the Holy Spirit gives you something better, deeper and more freeing than the things you used to think you wanted?

Prayer: Come, Holy Spirit, by your gentle, powerful presence and grow your beautiful fruit to fill and guide me to that wonderful life against which there is no law. Amen.