

Enjoying our Journey with the Holy Spirit (Part 3)

By Tom and Alberta Ecker

As we said previously, Jesus **sent the Holy Spirit** to the Apostles and disciples to **empower and enable** them to testify and witness. **God the Father sent God the Holy Spirit from Jesus for our benefit.** The Holy Spirit was **sent** to give us **new life, teach** us how to live in our new life **and empower** us to be **faithful** and **obedient** in our new life. **God the Holy Spirit** is the one who **Leads**, who **Counsels** and who **Directs** the Body of Christ (the Church) here on earth. As we begin to focus and reflect on **Romans 8** let's recap a few verses from Paul that bring us to the conclusion found in **Rom 8:1**. Then we can go on to understand how we journey with **God the Holy Spirit** as He **Leads Counsels** and **Directs**.

OPENING PRAYER

**Today, let's start with a question, who has control of our life?
(Romans 8:8-9).**

8 *Those **controlled** by the sinful nature cannot please God.*

9 *You, however, **are controlled not** by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.*

Two kinds of people are characterized by the controlling center of life: *"Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit" (vv. 8-9 above).*

I remember visiting my brother Frankie when he was in the Navy and assigned to a Destroyer in San Diego. That ship, like every ship, has a "command and control center." Here is where officers make decisions that fulfill the ship's mission and direction. Our lives are often like a ship at sea and we all need a "command and control center. "

In that context, what is the command and control center for our life? Is it *"the Spirit of God [who] lives in you" (v. 9 above)?*

I can hear the objection. "Wait a minute! I don't want any part of being controlled. I'm free!" Please consider a statement about *freedom* from Douglas A. Campbell, who has been interviewed By Dr. Feazell on You're Included. This statement comes from his book, *The Deliverance of God*, page 65 and speaks about Christian transformation with Christian freedom.

There is an important ethical dimension to this transformation. A slavery [controlled by sinful nature] to evil desires and to Sin – and thereby to the rule of Death – has been displaced by a new slavery [controlled by the Holy Spirit] "so to speak" (**Romans 6:19a**) to God that leads to holiness and to eternal life. (**Romans 6:19, 22-23**). That is, a transformation of the ethical capacity of humanity seems intrinsic to the entire salvific process; it is part of the event of grace (**Romans 6:15, 23**). However, any use of the notion of freedom – and it is used in some sense – **must be carefully qualified** (**Romans 6:18, 20, 22; 8:2, 20-21**). Paul seems to be speaking here primarily of negative liberty, to borrow Isaiah Berlins useful distinction. The saved have been rescued from an oppressive slavery. They now stand under a new ruler. As **Romans 6** emphasizes at length, they do not now enjoy unlimited freedom to direct their own lives but stand within a new, benevolent slavery.

The Holy Spirit accomplishes this in full respect of the freedom with which God made us. The fruit of the Spirit is "self-control" and "those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit" (**Gal. 5:23-25**). We are free, but do we look to and follow the direction of the Lord who set us free?

Another question, are we experiencing God's power? (Romans 8:10-11).

10 *But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is **alive** because of righteousness.*

11 *And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead **is living** in you, he who raised Christ from the dead **will also give life** to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who **lives** in you.*

To live by the Spirit is connection to spiritual power; "*your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness*" (**v. 10**). Have any of us fully realized that the same power that raised Jesus from the

dead abides in us (**v. 11**)? Wow! Easter is on the calendar each year, but Resurrection Day is available daily to the child of God. We have **power** to face the Devil and his temptations, **power** to comfort and strengthen us in illness and grief, **power** to cope on the job, **power** to use the gifts God has given us and work with Him to change our the world. Live by the Spirit; any other way is a mindless, out-of-control, powerless existence. Let's continue this thought...

***11** And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.*

To be in Christ Jesus is to live in his life in me and his life in me is imparted by the Holy Spirit. I deeply need to be given this new life through the Spirit to my mortal body, because as much as I want to live a sinless life, I am still confined to a body of flesh. Yet, because I am continually being led, counseled and directed by the Holy Spirit, I am no longer obligated to live according to the dictates of my flesh. That is why Paul speaks about the "obligation" that we have. As long as we are confined to our flesh we have an obligation to put to death the misdeeds of the body.

Now, as we go into Memorial Day, which is sort of a right of passage into summer, here is another question today based on **Romans 8:8-11: Do we need protective gear as we live our Christian lives?**

Cooking relaxes me, especially grilling. I can taste the grilled hamburgers, hot dogs, steaks, marinated chicken breasts, or grilled vegetables. Preparing it is most of the fun for me, except for one item: **onions**. They cause my eyes to turn red and tear up. I love onions, so I do an awful lot of cutting and crying.

Have you ever wondered why onions make us cry? I read something that was an eye opener. When onions are cut, an enzyme called **sulfoxide lyase** and **sulfuric compounds** are released from the broken cells. When exposed to air, they react with one another to form a vapor called **thiopropional sulfoxide**. As this vapor evaporates, it irritates our eyes and causes us to cry. The kitchen folklore remedies such as burning candles, slicing onions under water and freezing the onions before cutting don't work

That was enlightening information, but because of the crying and eye irritation, onions are the first thing I do in preparing food. Now there is a product I am planning to get, it is a protective gear that one can purchase to

protect the eyes from the onion irritation. It is pair of tear-free chopping, mincing, dicing, and slicing onion goggles. They are guaranteed to work!

A person can plunge right in with the tear-free chopping, mincing, dicing, and slicing onion goggles. Remember, we are talking about helpful protective gear. The protective gear sounds good and even looks good. But if we procrastinate and we don't seek and use the helpful protective gear that is available, then we will continue in our tears.

How often have we procrastinated about allowing God to give us life—abundant life that gives us real freedom to live under His sovereign rule? Some have lived so long with the idea that sin must have a total grip on their life that they may have ignored **Romans 8:1-11**. However, according to Paul, we don't have to be submerged or controlled by the sinful nature! Now that's good news. **Paul said we can have the Spirit of Life!**

"If Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness...If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you; He who raised Christ from the dead also will give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you" (Romans 8:9, 11).

Maybe we need to get some protective gear that will help us to plunge right into the onion that is holding us back. What is that protective gear? **Here are some constructive ideas that will keep us in our upward, inward and outward relationship with God in Christ Jesus through the Holy Spirit.**

1. **Upward: Ask God's help for holy living.** We sometimes want to take over on our own and forget to pray and ask God for divine direction. This is not just our battle...it is God's battle. He wants to empower us to live holy lives, but we need to always surrender to Him and ask for help
2. **Inward: Intro-inspection.** Assess the true situation. Looking at the situation from all angles will help us to evaluate the true situation. We can quit lying to our self about our relationship with God. If sin has control, then we need to confess to God our need for His life-giving Spirit that can set us free.

3. **Outward: Get outside feedback.** Find trusted friends to whom we can tell the situation and get their honest feedback. People can be honest. Maybe we need an accountability group who can pray with us and about our life. If we are in need of improvement, allow our friends to be open with us without becoming defensive.

Yes, new onion goggles will be comfortable because they have a foam seal that protects the eyes from irritating onion vapors. They are anti-fog lenses and offer maximum clarity and eye protection. They fit the shape of any face and come in their own storage case to keep them clean. We conclude by saying the above ideas will help keep each of us from crying over our own onion situation and give us a victorious life.

In conclusion, Romans 8:8-11 teaches us that to be **controlled** by the Holy Spirit and **experience** the Holy Spirit's power is one of the great blessings of transformation. Now, let's enjoy **Communion** together in response to this message...