

Ian Hamilton Gospel Shaped Life 5 20190217c

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[0 : 00] Amen. Well, please turn with me in your Bibles, if you have one with you, to Romans chapter 8.

And in particular, I want to consider the words in verse 14. Are sons of God. That's how the text, I think, should read.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God, they, and they alone, are sons of God. If we're going to rightly understand the 8th chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans, we need to understand that it's placed here not following on from chapter 7, as if we move out of the struggle of chapter 7 into the blessedness of life in the Spirit in chapter 8.

Chapter 8 is not, in a sense, spiritually sequential to chapter 7. It is spiritually synchronous with chapter 7.

That is to say, the struggle that Paul writes about in the latter half of chapter 7, the good that I would, I do not, the evil that I would not, that I do, that is not replaced by this higher life that is set before us in the 8th chapter.

[1 : 50] Rather, in the 8th chapter of his letter to the Romans, Paul is showing us what God has provided for us in the Lord Jesus to enable us to go on in the midst of our struggles and trials and troubles.

And what God has provided for us in the Lord Jesus Christ is none other than the Spirit of Christ. He has come from the Father and the Son to equip us, yes, but to enable us to go on, to go on. The Gospel-shaped life is a life that goes on. I remember many years ago, Eric Alexander telling me that when he was a young man, he was taken to Westminster Chapel in London when Dr. Lloyd-Jones was at the height of his powers.

And they had a wonderful evening listening to the doctor. And after the service, they joined a queue of people, there was always a queue of people wanting to speak to Dr. Lloyd-Jones.

And I remember Eric Alexander saying to me, Ian, I was so excited to be introduced to the doctor by this friend of mine. And as they got nearer the doctor, he realized that Dr. Lloyd-Jones was saying the exact same thing to every person who stopped to thank him.

[3 : 25] And what he said to everyone who stopped to thank him was simply this, go on. And then he said to me, he said, Ian, I thought, is this all the great man has to say?

These people who have been waiting to thank him for the ministry that has so blessed them, can you not vary it a little? Can you not embellish it somewhat? And then it dawned on me, what better thing could the doctor have said than go on?

And in the 8th chapter of his letter to the Romans, Paul is showing this church in Rome and through them the people of God in all the ages, what God has provided for us to enable us to go on in the life of faith.

And he tells us in this 14th verse, all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

And I'd like us this evening to think about that little phrase, all who are led by the Spirit of God. What does it mean to be led by the Spirit of God?

[4 : 50] What does it mean for you and for me to say to one another, I am being led by the Spirit of God?

Now the phrase you may know occurs in only two other places in the New Testament. We find it in Luke chapter 4. Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, you remember where he had been baptized, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

Full of the Holy Spirit, he returns from the Jordan where he has been publicly inaugurated into his ministry and mission as the Redeemer of God's elect, the Savior of the world.

And immediately he is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be confronted by the devil. And the other place where the phrase is mentioned is in Galatians chapter 5, where Paul writes in the 16th verse, But I say walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

[6 : 16] But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now it's very striking, I think, that in each of these three places, Romans 8, 14, Luke 4, verse 1, and Galatians 5, verse 18, the leading of the Spirit is presented to us in a context of spiritual conflict.

To be led by the Spirit, according to the New Testament, is not to have some esoteric experience. To be led by the Spirit is to be led into conflict, and to be equipped by the Spirit to engage with that conflict, and with His help, to overcome that conflict.

The Holy Spirit has come from the Father and the Son as the Spirit of the now risen, reigning, regnant Jesus Christ.

He has always been the Holy Spirit. from times eternal, with the Father and the Son, He existed in unbroken communion within the fellowship of the triune God.

But now, He has come into the world and uniquely and supremely into the life of the Church as the Spirit of the now risen, reigning, regnant Jesus Christ.

[8 : 02] and He has come into the world and into the Church principally to do two things. First of all, as Jesus tells us in John 16, verse 14, to bring glory to the Son of God.

He will bring glory to me. That is the great mission of the Holy Spirit. He has come from the Father and the Son to bring glory to the Son.

That is what He is principally about in this world. But allied to that, He has come also in order to accomplish bringing glory to the Son to transform the people of God into the likeness of the Son of God.

Rome, Paul tells us in Romans chapter 8, verse 29, a little later, that the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son has predestined us to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.

The great ministry of the Holy Spirit in your life and in my life if we are Christian believers, is to conform us to the likeness of Jesus Christ so that He might thereby become the firstborn of many brothers.

[9 : 35] That's why He has come. He is the Holy Spirit. He has not come to indwell us passively and inertly. He has come to make His holiness concrete in our lives.

For His holiness is the holiness of the Son of God who has sent Him into the world. And so Paul writes here in the 14th verse, for all who are led by the Spirit of God, they, and they alone, are the sons of God.

I want in our time this evening to flesh that out and to unpack what the Apostle Paul is teaching us here.

Notice, first of all, he is telling us that the leading of the Spirit is true for every Christian without exception. If you are not being led by the Spirit, you are not a Christian.

Look what he says. All who are led by the Spirit of God, a new translation probably says, all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

[10 : 57] But actually, the Greek text is much stronger. All who are led by the Spirit of God, they, and they alone, are the sons of God.

if you are not being led by the Spirit of God, we'll consider that in a moment, you cannot be numbered among the sons of God.

Secondly, notice the tense, a little bit of grammar. For all who are being constantly, day by day, moment by moment, being led by the Spirit, they, and they alone, are the sons of God.

The leading of the Spirit is not intermittent, it's not occasional, it's not spasmodic, it's not episodic. It is a moment by moment, day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year, leading. It's not an occasional thing. It is a continuous reality. But that leaves us asking the question, but what actually is the leading of the Spirit?

[12 : 18] What does it mean in practice to be led by the Spirit? And that's why we need to take seriously the first little word in the 14th verse.

For. And that for points us back to what Paul has just been writing in the previous verse. For, verse 13, if you live according to the flesh, you will die.

But, if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live for all who are being led by the Spirit of God, they, and they alone are the sons of God.

Now, Paul's argument and Paul's exposition is simply this. The great hallmark of the leading of the Spirit is that he leads us to put sin to death in our lives.

that's why the Spirit of God has come to us. Sin yet remains in us. We have, by the grace of God in Jesus Christ, been rescued from the guilt of sin.

[13 : 41] There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. us. But more than that, we have been delivered from the prevailing power of sin.

But sin yet remains to trouble us, to humble us, to harm us. It has not pleased God to eradicate sin yet from our lives.

That day will come. Blessed be God, that day will come. but while in this life, we have to cope every day with the reality of indwelling or remaining sin.

And the great ministry of the Holy Spirit, sent from the Father and the Son, is to help us put to death what is earthly in us.

God the Holy Spirit has come to make us like Christ and his great business is to eradicate everything in our lives that is not like Jesus Christ.

[14 : 59] I remember some years ago hearing about Greg Norman, the great Australian golfer, God's and he had been hired and paid vast sums to design a golf course.

And someone asked him, how did you go about it? How did you go about conceiving a golf course out of this wilderness? And he said, I looked at the wilderness and I thought to myself, I'm going to remove everything that isn't golf course.

I'm going to remove everything that isn't golf course. And that's what the Holy Spirit has come to do. He has come to remove everything that isn't Jesus Christ.

Or think of a sculptor who has this great plan, this great design in his head or her head. What do they do?

They go about taking a block of marble perhaps and what they are doing is they chip away at the marble is removing everything that isn't conformed to that predetermined design in their head.

[16 : 20] And that's what the Holy Spirit has come to do. He has come to help us put to death what is earthly in us. That's what the leading of the Spirit is.

That's why the phrase in Luke chapter 4 verse 1 is so significant. What is it the Holy Spirit is leading the Lord Jesus Christ into in the wilderness?

He's leading him into warfare with sin and Satan. Now our Savior has no indwelling sin to eradicate. But he is nonetheless being led by the Spirit to do battle on our behalf with the one who would seek to not only have sin yet remain in us, but to have us yet remain in sin.

sin. And the same is true if we had time we could see that in Galatians chapter 5 verses 16 through 18. So how does the Holy Spirit do this?

If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, he's not thinking simply about sensual sin, but about sin as it manifests itself concretely in our lives.

[17 : 52] You'll know how physical the Bible is when it speaks about sanctification. Sanctification is about where you look with your eyes, what you listen to with your ears, what you speak with your lips, where you go to with your feet, what you handle with your fingers.

We're to present our bodies as living sacrifices. We are to present our members as instruments of righteousness to God. And the Holy Spirit's great mission is to come and eradicate everything that isn't Jesus Christ in our lives.

And how does he do that? Well, let me mention just three things. Number one, he does that enabling us to say no to sin and temptation.

Sin can be exceedingly seductive. Sin is rarely gross. Sometimes it is and vile and you wouldn't touch it in the proverbial barge pole.

But most often Satan paints his temptations in seductive, desirable colors. And the Holy Spirit comes to indwell us, to give us the courage, the wisdom, the help to say no to the blandishments, the seductive temptations that Satan has so carefully plotted and planned to bring about our spiritual downfall.

[19 : 46] And because sin yet remains in us, there is a landing ground for those temptations. And the Holy Spirit has come that he might give us the courage, the grace, the wisdom, the insight to see through sin for what it is.

And to help us resist it and refuse it. If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body. Because like to ourselves, we are no match for sin and its master Satan. We are no match for the power even of indwelling sin left to ourselves.

But the Lord in his grace and goodness has not left us to face this ourselves. He has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts.

But not only does the Spirit come to help us to say no to sin. He comes to help us do battle with sin. [21 : 05] sin. The Christian life, the gospel shaped life, is a life of unremitting warfare.

I'm conscious in saying that, maybe some of you are thinking, but I thought the Christian life was a life of joy unspeakable and full of glory. Absolutely it is.

There is nothing in this cosmos like unto being a forgiven sinner, a child of the living God. The Christian life is synchronously at the same time filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory and unremitting warfare.

Paul puts it very dramatically in 2 Corinthians. In 2 Corinthians 2 verse 14 he says, we are always being led in Christ's triumphal procession.

It's a magnificent picture he's painting of a Roman general who comes to the gates of Rome and he has all his captives behind him. And Paul says, our captain Jesus Christ is leading us in triumphal procession.

[22 : 21] Always, he says, we are always being led in his triumphal procession. Not some of the time, not much of the time, not even most of the time, all of the time.

We are being led in triumphal procession. But then two chapters later he says, we are always being given over to death for Jesus sake.

He said, pardon? I thought I was being led in Christ's triumphal procession. Yes, you are. But at the same time, at the same time, you are always being given over to death for Jesus sake.

And part of what Paul means, I won't have time to unpack this, but part of what Paul means there is that the Christian life is a struggle and a battle. It's a battle with indwelling sin.

And we are called not just to refuse it and resist it, but with the help of the Spirit to wage warfare against the sin that yet remains in our lives, to humble us, to trouble us, and ultimately to bring dishonor to Jesus Christ.

[23 : 47] Because Satan is relatively unconcerned about you and about me. His great desire is to bring public disgrace and dishonor to the Lord Jesus Christ, and every sin we commit brings public dishonor to our Savior.

But the Spirit has come, and he has come to enable us to withstand the huge pressures that can come upon us.

I mentioned, I think, on Friday night, the example of Joseph in Genesis 39. What remarkable and tremendous pressures were upon Joseph to succumb to the seductions of Potiphar's wife.

Life had been a catalogue of miseries for Joseph, abandoned by his family, sold into slavery, but now here is the prospect of a little bit of life and happiness.

Seize it while you can, Joseph. How could I do such a thing and sin against God? And you don't need much imagination to think of what pressures there must have been upon that young man yet to simply succumb to the seduction and to seize a little bit of life and comfort while he could.

[25 : 24] And the Holy Spirit comes to enable God's people to wage war within our hearts and minds and lives against the temptations that would come to cripple us and kill us.

John Owen, the great English Puritan, has a quite magnificent treatise entitled, The Mortification of Sin, The Killing of Sin. He said, Be killing sin or sin will be killing you.

He wrote, the life, vigour and comfort of our spiritual life depends much on our mortification of sin.

The life, vigour and comfort of our spiritual life depends much on our mortification of sin.

Or think of the apostles as they boldly proclaimed Jesus Christ as Lord and the religious authorities said to them, You need to stop preaching in this name.

Woe betide you if you continue doing it. Remember how Peter could say at the end of Acts 5, We must obey God rather than man. Peter didn't know what that would mean for him.

[26 : 49] Would it mean for him? Would it mean for his saviour? Would it mean beatings and imprisonments? But the spirit of God comes and he takes this man who had caved in so weakly and cowardly before a servant girl and emboldens him.

The gospel-shaped life is a deeply pneumatic life. It is a life lived in the strength of the Lord, ministered to us by the Holy Spirit.

God's death. But there is a third way and perhaps a more significant way that the Spirit comes to help us put to death what is earthly in us.

He comes not only negatively to help us kill remaining sin, he comes positively to help us plant the graces of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In other words, he comes not only to help us root out the weeds that are spoiling and disfiguring our lives, he comes to help us plant the flowers of the grace of God so that our lives will give no room for sin.

[28 : 13] The more our lives are filled with the graces of the Lord Jesus Christ, the less room there is for the weeds and the putrefactions of sin to grow within us.

So Paul can write in Galatians 5, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace. You know the passage. Gentleness, goodness, meekness, patience, self-control.

As the Spirit comes, he brings into our lives the very grace of Jesus Christ. He comes as the one who mediates to us because of our union with Christ, the very life of Christ.

That's what the gospel shaped life is. It is a life into which the life of Jesus Christ has come not only to reside passively, but to reside transformingly.

He comes to indwell us and to fill our lives to overflowing so that our lives begin to begin to begin to resemble that of Jesus Christ.

[29 : 37] I'm sure like me you've met people over the years and as you've got to know them a little, perhaps the one thing that has really impacted you about them was this.

In their variegated humanity, you remind me of someone, my Savior, Jesus Christ. Maybe it's their kindness.

Remember Augustine? People remember Augustine, as I say in this earlier the week, I can't remember, but when he was converted, what people remember is the little child's voice saying, Tolly, leggy, Tolly, leggy, pick up and read.

And he goes into his house and he opens his Bible in Romans 13, verse 14, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh.

And he had lived a very licentious, ungodly, sensual life, and in that moment Augustine is converted. But what people don't often remember is that a few pages prior to telling us about his conversion and his confessions, he tells us about getting to know Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan.

[30 : 54] And he writes something very significant. He said, I went to hear Ambrose. He was the renowned preacher of the day. People travelled far and near to hear Ambrose declare the Christian Gospel.

And Augustine says, it wasn't his preaching that touched me. It was his kindness. It was his kindness.

You know, very often, Reformed or Calvinistic Christianity gets a bad press, and rightly so.

I've met some so-called Calvinists. I wouldn't ever want to meet them again. let me read to you what the New Testament says a Calvinist looks like.

Put on as God's elect compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another.

[32 : 07] And if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

That's what a Calvinist looks like. And if we don't look like that, in some measure, we have no right to say that we belong to the elect of God.

The Spirit of God comes to make us like Jesus Christ, and the most radical way to kill sin is to bring the grace of Jesus Christ to bear upon it.

John Owen speaks about it like this, I think. He says, we need to learn to bring the efficacy and the exigency of the grace of the death of Christ to bear upon indwelling sin.

Now, that's a mouthful. But he's saying, by faith, bring Jesus Christ, crucified, and who paid the price of sin, bring him in all his power, by his Spirit, to bear upon your life.

[33 : 26] life. I think he's probably saying something like this, every time indwelling sin rises, and seeks to seduce you, and tempt you, and draw you away from Jesus Christ.

bring the cross of Christ to confront it, and say, how could I do such a thing, and sin against God? You see, the Holy Spirit comes to lead us away from sin, and to Jesus Christ. He comes to lead us to put sin to death, death, and he comes to cultivate likeness to the Son of God in our lives.

So let me just try and briefly draw this together as we come to a close. Number one, a true Christian is always engaged in a battle with sin and temptation all his or her days.

This side of glory, you will always be engaged in a warfare. We never cruise to glory. Number two, the Holy Spirit indwells us to help us in our battle against the sin that yet remains within us.

[35 : 01] Number three, in the Holy Spirit's leading, we are active and not passive. We don't cruise to glory. we don't sit back and say, Holy Spirit, do it all.

As we'll see perhaps next Sunday morning, verse 26 and 27 of Romans 8, the Holy Spirit helps us. Helps us in our weakness. And it's interesting, that's a little five letter word in English, helps, but it's 17 letters in Greek, it's a Greek double compound.

And it means the Holy Spirit comes to stand over against us, but to come alongside us. You think, does that mean that sounds very Irish to me, but what?

How can he stand over against us and yet come alongside us? Well, because he's the multi-faceted Holy Spirit. He stands over against us because he doesn't do it for us.

And he comes alongside us and says, we'll do it together. We'll do it together. We'll do it in communion and in fellowship together. Two other brief points and then I'll close.

[36 : 11] The leading of the Spirit does not mean you will not fail or fall. Maybe you're different from me, but there's hardly a day I don't bemoan the contradictions in my life.

I'm a walking contradiction. I understand what Paul writes in Romans 7, the good that I would, I do not, the evil that I would not, that I do.

I understand when he writes, oh, wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. We're walking contradictions and we fail and we fall, but even then the Holy Spirit has not abandoned his leading. He doesn't give up on God's people. And he even uses our failures and our falls and our sins ultimately, staggeringly and unfathomably to work good for us.

All things, he will say in verse 28, all things, God works for the good of those who love him. Not some things, most things, but all things.

[37 : 27] even our sins. You see, like a glorious apothecary or chemist, he takes even poisons and mixes them together and makes them into something wholesome.

You know, heaven will be an unending wonder as we marvel at what God hath wrought. out of such poor specimens of redeemed humanity as we are.

And the last thing I want to say, and it goes back to a bit of grammar. Paul says in verse 13, for if you, plural, live according to the flesh, you, plural, will die.

But if by the spirit, you, plural, put to death the deeds of the body, you, plural, will live. In other words, Paul is addressing the church.

Yes, the church is made up of individuals, but he's addressing the body as a whole. You see, the Holy Spirit comes, yes, he comes to indwell us personally.

[38 : 51] but he comes to indwell the church corporately. And he comes to help us put sin to death, not simply privately and individually, but he helps us in the community of faith.

faith. That's why we have been called not only into union with Jesus Christ, but into union with one another.

Ephesians 3.18, it's together with all the saints that we learn how high and wide and deep and broad is the love of God. We don't learn that on our own some having quiet times, though we shouldn't quiet times.

We learn that together with all the saints. sin is best put to death, most radically confronted within the community of faith, as we share our burdens, our struggles, our hopes, our fears, our failures. Maybe the next time someone says to you, how has your week been, instead of saying, my default is fine, okay, I've got a friend in Canada, I phone, John Silver knows him well, and I'll say, John, how was your week?

[40 : 15] It was magnificent, he says, every time. And then he'll say, how was yours? And before I can open my mouth, he'll say, I bet it was okay. But the next time someone says, how was your week?

Maybe you could say, well, do you have a minute? I've really struggled with this temptation, this sin. I really would appreciate your counsel, your encouragement, your prayers.

We're not good at doing that for me. Maybe you are, I'm not. You've got to work hard to get to know me. But the Holy Spirit has come within the body of the church.

And we need one another. I'm always struck, I shouldn't go on any longer, but I'm always struck in Ephesians 5, where Paul, as he begins to delineate the spirit-filled life, the first mark of the spirit-filled life is.

Ephesians 5, what's the first mark of the spirit-filled life? Singing psalms. Wow. To one another. [41 : 28] You see, when you look at the book of Psalms, I'll just go on and run to do that. Worship is vertical, but it's also horizontal.

We're to sing to one another. Why? Because we need the encouragement. We need the comfort. We need the assurance I'm not in this on my own.

I'm in this together with brothers and sisters who love me and who are for me in Jesus Christ. So all who are led by the spirit are led by the spirit to put sin to death.

Be killing sin or sin will be killing you. may God bless to us his word.

Our closing hymn of praise