

THE REST OF THE STORY ROMANS 8:1-13

By Pastor John Carlini, D.Mn

M.I. VICTORY OVER SIN IN OUR LIVES COMES IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO HOW MUCH TIME AND ENERGY WE DEVOTE TO THE SPIRIT.

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THE REST OF THE STORY

ROMANS 8:1-13

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Last week, we described the conflict that we believers live with. Since we have become Christians, we find ourselves with this deep desire to do and to be good. In other words, we really want to be like Jesus. On the other hand we find that the fleshly part of us, the worldly part of us is at war with this spiritual side of us. It seems as if every time we want to do something good, our old nature prevents us from getting it done. On the other hand, it seems that no matter how hard we try to quit doing stupid stuff, we keep doing that.

As Paul looked at this war that took place within him, he cried out, “What a wretched person I am. Who will rescue me from this body of death?” He went on to say, “Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord,” and all of us collectively breathed a sigh of relief, and said, “Amen.”

He summarized the battle we all fight like this. He said that it seems as if the flesh side of us has a natural bent towards entertaining and serving sin. However, the spirit side of us has a natural bent towards serving God.

If you notice, the word spirit has been used only 4 times throughout the first 7 chapters of Romans. However, in chapter 8 alone, spirit is mentioned 22 times and most of them refer to the Holy Spirit in some sense.

Remember, this section of Romans, chapters 5-8 deal with life in Christ, once we have been saved, once we have become believers. Yes, we have seen that life as believers involve us in a battle between good and evil, and that battle takes place in our own personal lives in our pursuit of holiness. And further, we said it appears that evil has the upper hand in our earthly existence.

This section will deal with ways that can help us win these battles more often and more decisive. It will teach us about learning to live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

You know, part of living in the Spirit is taking in the word of God and its teachings. I take this task very seriously as I prepare each week to preach. My hope is that you leave here with some new insight into the Word of God. That's part of the way we can change our thinking. However, not everybody comes with that expectation. Now I'd like to say this happened at that church I used to pastor, ... but no, it happened right here. There are actually people who snooze during the sermon.

One day I was preaching a sermon on holiness and I asked, "Will all who want to go to heaven please stand?" Everybody stood except for one of my deacons who had fallen asleep.

Then I said, "Well, would all who would like to go to the other place please stand?" As the congregation sat, someone knocked over a hymnal close to the sleeping deacon. Quickly the deacon woke up, ... and stood up, dazed and sheepishly looking at me. He mumbled confusedly, "Well, pastor, I don't know what we're voting for, but it looks like you and I are the only ones for it."

I'm kidding of course. You all know our board members. That could never happen, especially since you know they hang on my every word. Let's see how we can make this struggle between good and evil more winnable in our lives.

If you remember from last week, I said that scholars disagreed how to interpret the experience in chapter 7. I went ahead and took a simple approach by interpreting the passage from my own personal experience in my struggle against sin.

This morning's passage is hotly debated by scholars as well. There are those who believe that once you're saved you're always saved. In other words, there is nothing we can do, once we're saved, that could cause us to lose our salvation. They would focus heavily on verse 1 of this passage.

On the other hand, there are those who believe that our salvation, although given to us freely by grace through faith, are responsible to pursue holiness, and if we don't, we may fall back into a state of sin that would cause us to lose our salvation. They would focus heavily on verse 13.

If I said what I am about to say in front of some of my professors or colleagues, they would rake me over the coals. You see, even though both of these schools of thoughts make good arguments for their position, it seems as if they never give enough force to the texts and verses that defends the other position. Since we are children of the West, we have inherited a basic approach to life that comes from Plato and Aristotle. We feel that everything has to be logically consistent and neatly explained with no loose ends. Unfortunately, I'm not convinced that God always plays by these rules. I think there are several situations and ideas that may not be logically consistent or explainable from our limited, sinful, positions. For example, the Bible teaches that God is totally sovereign and that we are free. The Bible teaches that The Father is God, Jesus is God, and The Holy Spirit is God. Yet we believe in One God. Here it seems to say that in one sense our salvation is secured once for all time, and that in some way, we are responsible to pursue holiness and conquer sin in our lives.

I believe in all these above statements with all my heart. In fact, my faith in Who God is, is based on these truths. Even though they seem contradictory, I believe them and don't want to shortchange any of them. In a noble attempt to somehow defend God, scholars rush to make

these truths compatible. But I have noticed that in order to do so, one side of the truth seems to get subordinated to the other. I would much rather let the tensions stand, because as I look at life, that's the way life seems to be. And so, I will approach this from a pastoral standpoint. In other words, there are times in our lives when we need to be assured of our eternal salvation, hearing verse 1 loud and clear. On the other hand, there are times in our lives when we need to hear verse 13 and get serious about our Christian walk.

But on the whole, this morning's passage addresses the topic we talked about last week, that struggle we have with sin in our lives. The message this morning is, **VICTORY OVER SIN IN OUR LIVES COMES IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO HOW MUCH TIME AND ENERGY WE DEVOTE TO THE SPIRIT OF GOD.** In mathematical terms, the more time and energy we spend listening and submitting to the prompting of God's Spirit, the more decisive victories we will have over sin. Living in the Spirit equates to victory.

I. CHANGING OUR OUTLOOK (Vs. 1-4)
THE HOLY SPIRIT REMINDS US THAT SINCE JESUS DIED FOR US, WE NO LONGER HAVE TO FEAR JUDGMENT. SINCE JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD, WE ARE FREE TO PURSUE HOLINESS.

In verses 1-4, we can see that living in the Spirit equates to changing our outlook. In other words, **THE HOLY SPIRIT REMINDS US THAT SINCE JESUS DIED FOR US, WE NO LONGER HAVE TO FEAR JUDGMENT. SINCE JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD WE ARE FREE TO PURSUE HOLINESS.** It seems that if we are always afraid of making a mistake, or if we worry about all sorts of religious rules and regulations, we will become too tentative to live boldly for God. Loving God ultimately translates into trusting God, trusting in His love, His goodness, and His grace.

A. FREE FROM JUDGMENT (Vs. 1-2)

Verses 1-2 remind us that because we have been saved by grace through faith, we are free from judgment. God is not waiting up in heaven with a big stick, waiting for us to screw up, and then hammer us. This verse starts out with, “Therefore.” Because we have placed our faith in Christ, we are believers. God changed our eternal destinies from death to life. Paul further said that he sees this battle between his spirit and his flesh. But he comforts us immediately by reminding us that we are no longer under this law of sin and death. That law said, “If you sin, you die.” And since all of us have sinned, all of us are condemned to death. Remember, death here means eternal separation from God. All of us deserve to spend eternity in hell. That is what condemnation means in verse 1. If God were to exercise judgment based on our behavior, all of us would deserve hell. However, because of the fact that Jesus paid the price for us, He replaced that law with the law of the Spirit and life. In other words, even though we still sin, and deserve to be separated from God, the new law, the law of the Spirit says that we have now been declared not guilty and we have been reconciled to God. This new law says, “Even though you sin, you won’t die.” We can never be holy enough or good enough to deserve life with God in heaven. There are not enough laws we could ever keep. Paul reminds us here that because of God’s passionate love for us, our eternal destinies have been changed by grace through faith in Jesus. So this first step in our fight against sin is to realize that we are no longer bound by it. We are new creations in Christ.

B. RECONCILED WITH GOD (V. 3)

Verse 3 builds on this theme of God’s passionate love by stating clearly that we have been reconciled with God. In other words, we are no longer God’s enemies, we are His children. Now even though I preach from the NIV, I don’t like the way the NIV and the NLT have translated this passage. I understand why they did it, but I think it causes us to lose sight of the

nature of the battle. They have translated the word “flesh” as sinful nature, sinful mind, or nature. This passage is meant to contrast the flesh with the Spirit. Let me define for us flesh so every time we hear it, we can have this broad meaning attached to it. For the most part, it describes our earthly existence as we live it apart from God. In terms that we have already discussed, it is living according to the Adam nature that we have inherited from Adam and Eve. This nature has a bent towards evil. As we will also see, less often, it can merely refer to our physical existence that is neither good nor bad.

On the other hand the word Spirit will be used 11 times in this passage. Watch this throughout the passage. I think it is meant to be blurred sometimes. In almost every case it refers to God The Holy Spirit directly or in combination with our spirit. That is the second usage of spirit. This refers to the part of us that came alive when we trusted Jesus. It refers to us as born again, that part of us that desires to love and serve God. It refers to that part of us that has a bent towards God. So the flesh and The Spirit will be contrasted in this passage.

Here in verse 3 we are reminded that even though God’s laws are good, they can’t save us because as we discussed last week, that flesh part of us, that sinful nature we inherited from Adam holds us back from doing good. So even though we know the law is good, we feel even worse now that we are believers because we can never seem to do the good we want.

However, the flesh doesn’t have the last word in regards to sin. Here is where the passion of God is described. He loved you and me so much, that He sent His one and only, His unique Son to pay the price that satisfies this law concerning sin and death. Jesus had to come in the likeness of sinful flesh in order to take care of this problem. In order to be our sin offering, in order to be our substitute, He had to come as fully human. In other words, even though He is God, Jesus had to be fully human as well. So He came with a physical body, with all our natural

emotions, desires, and needs. However, He is only like us, He is not us in the sense that He never sinned. Otherwise He could not be an acceptable sacrifice in our place. God only accepts perfect sacrifices. So Jesus came as fully human. He was like us in that He was flesh and blood. He was not like us in that He never sinned.

We deserved to have the law that says whoever sins dies. When Jesus died on the cross, God applied that law to Jesus. God took all the consequences of our sins and applied that to His beloved Son, also God, and transferred it to Jesus. Jesus destroyed that law. Now the law of grace has been substituted and love has been applied to us.

Please don't miss this. ***HOW MUCH DOES GOD THE FATHER LOVE YOU AND ME? HE CHOSE TO WATCH HIS ONE AND ONLY SON DIE FOR US. IN FACT, HE SENT HIS SON AND APPLIED THE PUNISHMENT FOR OUR SINS TO HIM.***

HOW MUCH DOES JESUS, GOD THE SON LOVE YOU AND ME? HE VOLUNTARILY LEFT HIS HOME IN HEAVEN, CAME DOWN TO EARTH, TOOK ON HUMAN FLESH, SUFFERED AND DIED SO THAT WE COULD BE RECONCILED WITH GOD.

I have never loved anyone like that before. Has anyone ever loved you like that before? Well the powerful truth is that God loves you that powerfully and passionately. We no longer have to worry about judgment because we have been reconciled with God.

C. HOLY AND UPRIGHT (V. 4)

And verse 4 illustrates for us the results of this fact. We are now free to live holy and upright lives. In Jesus' death, our sin problem was taken care of. In His resurrection our pursuit of holiness is taken care of. Look carefully to whom this applies. It doesn't apply to people who pursue life driven by the flesh. It applies to those of us who pursue spiritual things, to those of us

who follow God's Holy Spirit. Jesus lived life perfectly. He kept the religious laws perfectly and further, He kept the law of love perfectly. He did that for us. Not only is His innocence applied to us, His holiness and righteousness is applied to us as well. The only way I can defeat sin in my life, is to submit to The Holy Spirit, and Jesus live His holiness and righteousness through me.

Here is the point to this section. We have been set free from the fear of death. We don't have to fear being alienated from God. God has empowered us to pursue holiness. As we will see later, God lives in us. If we die to self, and allow Him to live through us, we will enjoy life.

THE HOLY SPIRIT REMINDS US THAT SINCE JESUS DIED FOR US, WE NO LONGER HAVE TO FEAR JUDGMENT. SINCE JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD, WE ARE FREE TO PURSUE HOLINESS.

Here's our new outlook on life. We are children of God. He loves us and looks at us through the righteousness of Jesus. In God's eyes, we are perfect. We are now to look at ourselves as saints. If we view ourselves as sinners, as fleshly, as worldly, then we will always be able to live down to that. If we look at ourselves as redeemed, as spiritual, as children of God, as saints, then we will tend to live up to that. We are saints. Take a deep breath and close your eyes. Think about this. You know how Mother Teresa lived here life? ***GOD VIEWS YOU IN THE SAME CATEGORY AS HER. CAN YOU PICTURE THAT? (PAUSE)*** That's who we are. Now let's keep that image in our minds and start to live up to that.

II. CHANGING OUR THINKING (VS 5-8)

IF WE WANT TO PURSUE HOLY LIVES, THEN WE MUST QUIT FILLING OUR MINDS WITH WORLDLY IDEAS AND ALLOW GOD TO CHANGE OUR THINKING BY FOCUSING OUR MINDS ON SPIRITUAL THINGS.

Now in verses 5-8, we should now be about the task of changing our thinking. In other words **IF WE WANT TO PURSUE HOLY LIVES, THEN WE MUST QUIT FILLING**

OUR MINDS WITH WORLDLY IDEAS AND ALLOW GOD TO CHANGE OUR THINKING BY FOCUSING OUR MINDS ON SPIRITUAL THINGS. Jesus told us that He came to give us abundant lives. He wanted us to be filled with peace and joy. Here is a formula that we have all become familiar with. Again, it is pretty mathematical. ***RIGHT THINKING LEADS TO RIGHT BEHAVIOR, WHICH LEADS TO RIGHT FEELINGS.***

A. A CHANGE IN THINKING (V. 5)

Verse 5 calls us to make a change in thinking. Paul says, those who find themselves living fleshly lives can easily trace it to the fact that their minds are flooded with what the flesh desires. In other words, one of the reasons we fight so hard with sin is because we let all sorts of worldly sources inform us of what is desirable. Let me give you an example. All of you who know me, know that I am not a very legalistic Christian. But I think I am safe in saying that there are many Christians who watch quite a bit of cable t.v. Now I am proud to say that I have never watched an episode of either Sex in the City or the Sopranos, two of the most popular shows on television. However, what I have read about them is that one promotes sex, the other violence. Now I know I am oversimplifying this, but stay with me, because if the ratings and statistics are right, many of you watch. Would you say that the themes of these programs promote spiritual purity, spiritual kindness, or any pursuit of holiness? You see, I'm guessing that the stuff that is portrayed on those shows has nothing that is pleasing to God. Now if that is what is filling your mind, guess what your flesh is going to start to desire and to be attracted to?

If you spend a lot of time reading secular magazines, listening to secular radio, watching secular t.v., guess what kinds of feelings, emotions, and passions are going to be aroused in your flesh? How is it that Christians can be just as sexually promiscuous as non-Christians? How is it that Christians can be just as angry and violent as non-Christians? How is it that Christians can

act just as sinful and unethical as their non-Christian coworkers and neighbors? ***THE ANSWER IS EASY! WE'RE FILLING OUR MINDS WITH THE SAME CRAP AS THEY ARE!***

Do we really want to win this battle over sin in our lives? Paul says that if we set our minds on spiritual things, then we will start to have spiritual desires. If we focus on the leading of God's Holy Spirit, and fill our minds with godly input, then we will strengthen our spirits in their war against the flesh. If we fill our minds with Christian music, read Christian magazines and books, if we study our Bibles, keep a rich devotional life, stay awake during the sermons, then we will give the spiritual side of ourselves a decided edge against the flesh because we will be feeding our spirits and starving our flesh. We are not to read the bible and do devotions because somehow that makes us holy and righteous. We do these things in order to feed our spiritual natures so they can become strong and defeat evil in our lives.

B. A CHANGE IN MINDSET (V. 6)

Verse 6 describes how changing our thinking can lead to a change in mindset. The mindset of the flesh is death. In other words, those who consistently feed themselves with fleshly and worldly thoughts, will ultimately develop a mindset in which they are not interested in anything Godly. Their destiny is ultimate separation from God. They will be controlled by fear.

On the other hand, those who feed the spiritual side of their nature will develop a mindset that seeks to be in the presence of God and to please God. Here the Holy Spirit brings peace and joy. This is life in union with God. That's what the Hebrew word Shalom means. Peace for the Hebrews meant that no matter what the circumstance, good or bad, to know that I am in union with, and in the presence of God my strength and joy.

C. A CHANGE OF CONTROL (Vs. 7-8)

This naturally requires a change in control as described in verses 7-8. Submission is not a very popular word today. But again, Paul seems to make it clear that we only have two choices and further, that these choices are mutually exclusive. Those who develop a fleshly mindset, will ultimately be controlled by the flesh. These kind of people don't care what God says. They will continue to do what they want and live the way they want. That's why we see so many broken lives. People who allow themselves to be controlled and manipulated by worldly thoughts, cannot please God. We are to surrender our thinking and our attitudes to God The Holy Spirit and fill our minds with God's truths. In his letter to the Philippians Paul put it this way, "Finally brothers and sisters, think about these things – those things that are true, noble and right, ... those things that are pure lovely and admirable ... those things that are excellent or praiseworthy ... those are the things I want you to fill your thinking with" (my paraphrase Philippians 4:8).

Does that describe what we are putting in our minds? If I give you a moment to think, what percentage of what goes in your mind comes from the television, radio magazines etc., compared to godly input? What percentage of your thoughts is focused on worldly concerns compared with heavenly concerns? (PAUSE)

Can you see why we have trouble defeating sin in our lives? Here is the formula. **IF WE WANT TO PURSUE HOLY LIVES, THEN WE MUST QUIT FILLING OUR MINDS WITH WORLDLY IDEAS AND ALLOW GOD TO CHANGE OUR THINKING BY FOCUSING OUR MINDS ON SPIRITUAL THINGS.**

I just quoted Philippians 4:8 where Paul tells us to fill our thinking with godly thoughts. In Philippians 4:9 he goes on to say, "Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice." That is right behavior. Verse 8 said that right thinking plus verse 9, right behavior leads to the last sentence in verse 9, which is right feeling, "And the God

of peace will be with you.” Peace is the result of right thinking and right behavior. No matter how rich you are, ... no matter how hard you chase after worldly things, ... no matter how much you try and satisfy the cravings of the flesh, ... you can’t ever buy or capture peace. That is a gift from God that comes from right thinking and right behavior.

III. CHANGING OUR BEHAVIOR (Vs. 9-13)

SINCE WE KNOW WHAT IS GOOD, AND SINCE THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD LIVES IN US, WE MUST CHOOSE HOW WE WANT TO LIVE. DEFEATING SIN IS NOT EASY, BUT IT IS CERTAINLY NOT IMPOSSIBLE.

Let’s examine what changing our behavior consists of in verses 9-13. **SINCE WE KNOW WHAT IS GOOD, AND SINCE THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD LIVES IN US, WE MUST CHOOSE HOW WE WANT TO LIVE. DEFEATING SIN IS NOT EASY, BUT IT IS CERTAINLY NOT IMPOSSIBLE.**

A. POWER TO WIN (Vs. 9-10)

Verses 9-10 tell us why we have the power to win. These two verses are packed with all sorts of wonderful, rich Christian doctrines. Henry did a really nice job on this text in our Friday night prayer meeting study. First of all, the word Trinity is not found in the Bible. It is merely a word that describes the nature of God as spelled out in scripture. The Holy Spirit is referred to in these 2 verses as The Spirit, The Spirit of God, and The Spirit of Jesus. Further it says that the Spirit lives in us. But also it says that Jesus is in us. Throughout the Bible The Father is referred to as God, Jesus is referred to as God, and the Holy Spirit is referred to as God, at the same time stating that there is One God. I would love to talk with anyone about this in depth, but let me just point this out. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul said that when Jesus lived in human flesh on earth, the fullness of the Godhead lived in Him. In other words, the presence, the power, and nature of God The Father and God The Holy Spirit lived in Jesus. That’s mind-boggling in itself. But then he goes on to say that when Jesus came into our hearts at conversion, that

fullness of the Godhead took up residence in our lives. Now that just blows me away. The next time you say, I just can't do this or that, let your mind wander to the thought that the fullness of God, the creator of the universe lives in you. As that thought sinks in, we can start to say with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me."

Here is further what that means. When we received Christ in salvation, the Holy Spirit of God came into our lives. There is no 2nd reception of the Holy Spirit. If you don't have the Holy Spirit, you're not saved. But if you're saved, you have the Holy Spirit. And if we have the Spirit of God, then our spirits are alive in Christ and we now have a desire to do good. Since we are in the flesh, which is destined for death, we experience the conflict. But the Holy Spirit will strengthen our spirit as we surrender to Him.

Next, there is a nice little twist in this passage. The beginning of verse 9 says that we are not controlled by the flesh if we are IN THE SPIRIT. Literally it says that we are in the Spirit. Then later it says that the Spirit is in us. Paul said in the letter to the Ephesians that we are already seated in the heavenlies with Jesus. Think about this carefully. Because Jesus lives in us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, ... Jesus occupies earth living in us. On the other hand, because we are in the Holy Spirit, we occupy heaven with Jesus. As believers, we live in two worlds. If we realize that the fullness of God lives in us, and that we are now living in heaven as we walk here on earth, do you think that might cause us to change how we talk and behave? What I do here is acted out in heaven. What I say here is heard in heaven. Is what I say and do consistent with my status as a heavenly ruler?

B. POWER TO GO ON (V. 11)

Verse 11 gives us the power to go on. I just mentioned this. God sees us as already occupying heaven. Our salvation, our justification, our sanctification, and our glorification is

already a done deal in His mind. He will complete the good work He started in us. The same Holy Spirit power that raised Jesus from the dead, not only gave life to our spirits, ... That same Holy Spirit will someday give life to these mortal bodies of ours. Remember, Paul said that sin still lives in our fleshly bodies. We will all die. That means that our spirits, since they have been given life by God will separate from our bodies and go to heaven. Our bodies however, will go dirt surfing until we turn to dust. On the last day, God will raise our dead, corrupted bodies and transform them into resurrection bodies. Sin will have died there in our graves. Then He will join our redeemed spirits with our redeemed bodies.

In God's mind, that day has already happened. He wants us to get a view from the end. There will be a day in which we will literally be dead from sin. Paul tells us over and over again to try and view ourselves that way. Look, let's say I'm dead. I'm a corpse lying in the casket. One guy comes and offers me a million dollars. What would a dead body do with a million dollars. A naked lady comes up to the casket and offers me sex. What would be so appealing about that offer to a dead corpse? Do you get it? Worldly things have no use to a dead person. If we view ourselves dead to the world, the things of the world can't ensnare us. Spend time thinking about how it will be when we have been resurrected from the dead, with new, beautiful, pain free, perfect bodies to go with our beautiful, godly spirits. God sees us like that. Can we?

C. POWER TO CHOOSE (Vs. 12-13)

Verses 12-13 remind us that we have power to choose. Now even though Paul has hammered home the fact that we have been saved by grace through faith, there is a warning here. If we live according to the flesh we will die. In other words, as we have pointed out earlier, if we continue to fill our minds with worldly thoughts, and develop a worldly, fleshly mindset that cares nothing about God's laws, that will lead to worldly, fleshly behavior that will ultimately

lead to eternal separation from God. Here is why I think the Bible is pastoral. I have seen many pastors and Christians being sexually promiscuous. They are involved in adulterous affairs, extramarital sex, and all sorts of sex outside of marriage. As they have been confronted about their behavior, they say something like, “I’m saved by grace through faith. It doesn’t matter what I’m doing.” To them, Paul says, “Hey buddy, if you are living according to the flesh, you will die.” It’s meant to be harsh.

On the other hand, someone who is desperately trying to please God and defeat sin in their lives and never being able to rest in God’s love, they need to hear verse 1, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

We have the power to choose, if we are Christians. We have the Holy Spirit of God living in us. We have the assurance of salvation. Even though we recognize the struggle we fight against sin, we have been given powerful help to win. Indeed we have to make a choice to fill our heads with right thinking, develop a godly mindset that will help us to put into practice the good that we so desperately desire to do. The point is, **SINCE WE KNOW WHAT IS GOOD, AND SINCE THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD LIVES IN US, WE MUST CHOOSE HOW WE WANT TO LIVE. DEFEATING SIN IS NOT EASY, BUT IT IS CERTAINLY NOT IMPOSSIBLE.**

I would say that I know most of you pretty well. And like me, I know that you have received Christ and there is a part of you that has fallen in love with God. I hope that this morning’s text has now given us the edge over the sin in our lives. We can win this battle because the Apostle John said, speaking of God’s Holy Spirit, “Greater is He that is in you, than he who is in the world.” Let’s start to submit to God’s Holy Spirit. Let Him change our outlook as to who we are in Christ. Let Him change our thinking. Let Him change our behavior.

Because if we are going to win this battle, we must realize that **VICTORY OVER SIN IN OUR LIVES COMES IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO HOW MUCH TIME AND ENERGY WE DEVOTE TO THE SPIRIT.**

Listen to this great story that Joe Price tells. I think it nicely illustrates the wisdom in submitting to and following God's Holy Spirit in our journey towards heaven.

A few years ago, a hunter realized a long-standing dream as he traveled to a part of Canada's northland that is justly famous for its good hunting. The last part of his trip was by bus, and the hunter talked with the other passengers, eager to discover what he could about his anticipated adventure. They gave him directions to the lodge and, as they seemed to know what they were talking about, he had no hesitation in setting out for the camp when the bus arrived at the village.

With his gear slung over his shoulder, he walked for more than an hour, but he didn't see anything like the place the people on the bus had described. Realizing that he had trusted the wrong persons, he retraced his steps to the village. He went into the little general store where some villagers were sitting around a wood stove. "Where can I get a good guide?" asked the hunter, and immediately one of the men suggested a guide. But having been misled before, the hunter asked, "How can I be sure this man you suggested can be trusted?"

"Stranger," answered the man who had made the suggestions, "I'll give you three reasons why this guide can be trusted. First, he's never failed anybody. Second, he's been over the trail many times and knows every step of the way. Third, his father owns the lodge you're looking for, and he's going to make sure you get there safely!"

There is never any shortage of people willing to offer advice and guidance. But often, such advice is confusing, even conflicting. So how do we decide which advice and guidance to follow? And how do we know what and whom to trust?

The answer that Christians have found is our one, absolutely dependable guide for life is Holy Spirit*. And the reasons for trusting him are the same as those given to the hunter in the story. First, the Holy Spirit* has never failed anyone who has trusted him. Second, he knows the way because he has traveled it himself. And third, his father owns "the lodge" which is our destination and He* will make sure we arrive there safely.

Note: *Changes are made by Pastor J. Carlini