

Summary

- a) This session is the fifth of ten sessions that looks at a vital principle that fosters Spirit-led living.
- b) The fifth principle that we will examine is this: Living by the Spirit begins when living for God ends.
- c) This session looks at the problem of trying to be holy in your own effort. Why only Christ in you living through you can empower you to obey His commandments from the heart in motive, thought, and deed. And what it means to be delivered from living by the tree of knowledge and living instead by the tree of life.

Review from Last Week

a) Romans 5:9-10

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son [justification], much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life [sanctification].

b) Romans 3-8

- In Romans 3-5, the main theme is Jesus saves you from the penalty of sin through the gift of imputed righteousness and justification by grace alone through faith alone apart from obedience and works.
- Romans 3-5 is about salvation from your sins—the penalty for your sins in hell.
- In Romans 6-8, the main theme is Jesus saves you from the power of sin when you come to the end of yourself, begin living by His life, and become slaves of obedience by the indwelling Spirit's enabling grace.
- Romans 6-8 is about salvation from your sin—the power of sin at work in your flesh, the root of sin that produces sins.

c) New Testament obedience

- The abiding life hinges on obedience to Jesus' commandments. Jesus told His disciples, "If you keep My commandments you will abide in My love" (John 15:10).
- The New Testament commandments, especially in the Sermon on the Mount, are far more difficult and exacting under grace.
- Under the law, you had to actually commit the act while under grace you merely have to want to commit the act.

d) Grace versus the law

- The law is primarily concerned with behavior modification, external compliance, and bodily restraint.
- Grace, on the other hand, is primarily concerned about the transformation of the heart and subsequent obedience from the heart in motive, thought, and deed.
- There is a clear transition from living under the law to living under grace. Under the law, God's demands upon us are summarized by *you shall not*. Under grace, the Lord did eleven things for us and in us before giving us the requirement to obey.

- Under the law, the focus was completely on you—your performance, your obedience, your works. The law demanded a people devoid of a godly nature should, ought to, and must behave a certain way.
- Under grace, the Lord took on the responsibility to do a work for you and in you so you could keep the demands He makes on you. Under grace, the focus has completely shifted to Christ, who finished the work for you and is now finishing the work in you as He lives His life through you.
- Grace shifts the external obligation to obey God from an unrighteous nature to an internal desire to obey God from a new righteous nature.

e) Main difference between law and grace is how you obey.

1. Will you try to obey Jesus' commandments by living for God?
2. Or will you obey His commandments by living from God?

f) Fifth law of the Spirit-led life

Living by the Spirit begins when living for God ends.

g) Paul's struggle with coveting

- After Paul was born again, he initially thought God required him to keep the commandments in his own strength and power.
- The commandment caused Paul to focus upon himself rather than Jesus.
- God's commandments drove Paul to the place of utter desperation, and like a lifeguard, the Lord waited until Paul had exhausted all his strength and power trying to obey before coming to the rescue.
- Paul discovered Jesus not only saved him from sins, but He could also save him from the source of sins—living by self-life in the soul. When this light of revelation shined into Paul's heart, he rejoiced and said, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 7:25).
- Paul then said, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death" (Rom. 8:2).
- Paul then said, "So that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4).

h) Synergism

- Obedience under grace is synergism between you and the indwelling Spirit.
- The indwelling Spirit has a part to play and you have a part to play.
- The Spirit won't do your part and you can't do His part.
- Theologians refer to this as synergism.
- The Spirit's role in obedience is to initiate, inspire, exhort, encourage, empower, and convict.
- Your role in obedience is to yield, rely upon, and live by the Spirit's empowering grace. And to then labor, work, and strive by the Spirit's grace to radically obey God's Word and voice.

The Galatians Tried to Be Holy

- a) Not only did Paul try to live for God and fail miserably. But the Galatians also tried to obey God's commandments by self-effort and were rebuked for not relying on the Spirit.
- b) Paul said to them, "You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? (Gal. 3:1-3, emphasis mine)
- c) The Galatians having begun by the Spirit—meaning they were justified and approved by God through faith in Jesus Christ—were now being perfected by the flesh.
- d) The Galatians were trying to be holy and please God by self-effort and self-determination. Even after they were born of the Spirit, they were still trying to live for God.
- e) The New Living Translation makes it even more plain: "How foolish can you be? After starting your Christian lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?" (Gal. 3:3 NLT).
- f) The Greek word for perfected is *epiteleō* and means "to bring to an end, accomplish, perfect, execute, complete, to take upon one's self."
- g) Notice carefully the phrase take upon one's self. The idea is someone is taking a task and bringing the task to completion through self-effort.
- h) Applied to the Galatians, they must have thought, "Thank you, Jesus, for saving me and getting me this far. But now I am good enough, strong enough, and disciplined enough to take it from here and bring my sanctification to completion through my obedience."
- i) The Galatians were trying to sanctify themselves by obeying God's commandments in their own strength. They were not relying on the indwelling Spirit to empower their spirit, fill their heart, and enable them to obey from the inside out.
- j) The Galatians nullified God's grace by trying to live for God. They were trusting in:
 - Willpower,
 - self-determination,
 - independent grit,
 - and religious resolve rather than relying on the indwelling Spirit's power and enablement.
- k) They placed a higher priority upon external obedience and outward conformity to God's commandments than internal transformation, which leads to obedience from the heart in motive, thought, and deed.

Modern-Day Christians Trying to Be Holy

- a) Many Christians today are trying to live for God. They place:
 - right doing above right believing,
 - achieving above receiving,

- striving above abiding,
 - behavior modification above a changed heart,
 - the demands of external commandments above the Spirit's enablement,
 - personal responsibility above the Spirit's ability,
 - their works above Christ's finished work,
 - and external righteousness above the Spirit's imparted righteousness.
- b) Many are trying to finish the work in their own power rather than believing the work was finished on the cross, the Holy Spirit has finished the work in their spirit, and He is now finishing the work in their soul as they respond to His leadership.
- c) They are trying to perfect their soul through religious activities rather than allowing the Perfect One in them to live His perfect life through them.
- d) Only Christ
- is holy,
 - has fully overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil,
 - and pleases the Father.
- e) This is why only Christ in you can purify you from the inside out, from the deepest part of your spirit to the core of your soul to the outermost recesses of your body.
- f) And only Christ in you, living His life through you, can please the Father. Nothing you ever do for God in the power of the soul will ever please the Father.

A Kind Rebuke

- a) Not only can we try to obey God's requirements and try to live holy by self-effort, as was the case with Paul and the Galatians, it's also possible to try to live by Christ's indwelling life by applying a set of principles rather than coming to Him and relying on Him to live in us and through us. I learned this lesson the hard way. Here's what I mean.
- b) While preparing to write this class, I read and studied about how to live by Christ's indwelling life. Anything I found related to this topic, whether in Scripture, social media, or in a book, I made note of for possible use in this class.
- c) Even though I have been on a journey to live by Christ's indwelling life for over fifteen years, I know the learning never stops. So, I also asked the Lord repeatedly to teach me how to live by His indwelling life.
- d) As I was doing this diligently, the Lord interrupted my prayer one morning and spoke this to my spirit:

Bryan, you are trying to accumulate knowledge about how to live by My indwelling life, so you can take that knowledge and apply it independently of Me. You are trying to live by My indwelling life from a set of principles you know rather than coming to Me in you. Living by My indwelling life begins and ends with you coming to Me in you and allowing Me to live rather than you.

- e) When the Lord spoke this to me, it unearthed how much the tree of knowledge was still implanted within my soul. It uncovered how frequently I live by independent self-effort. Living by what I know rather than by relational dependence on a Person. This was such a wonderful and kind rebuke!
- f) Speaking from experience, it's so easy to take the laws of the Spirit-led life, and without even realizing it, try to apply these through soul power independent of Christ. I still fall into this trap often.
- g) If you are like me, perhaps you have tried living by Christ's indwelling life from a set of principles you know rather than coming to Christ in you and allowing Him to live His life through you. You can easily try to apply the laws of the Spirit-led life on your own, not relying on the indwelling Spirit.
- h) When the Lord corrected me, it unveiled a deeply imbedded flaw in my soul, implanted through the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, stemming all the way back to Adam. And this flaw is not just in me, it's in every person alive right now, including you.
- i) If you keep peeling back the layers of the onion, everything eventually comes down to this: Are you living for God or are you living from God? Are you living from the tree of knowledge or are you living from the tree of life?

What Tree Are You Living From?

- a) When you try and live for God, you are living by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This is trying to be like God, by knowing good and evil, apart from God (see Gen. 3:5).
- b) Living by this tree depends upon knowledge rather than Christ's indwelling life.
- c) On the other hand, when you live from God who dwells in you, you are living by the tree of life. Living by this tree is an internal, life-based, relational dependence upon Christ in you.
- d) Until the Lord shined His light into my heart, I had no idea just how deeply imbedded the fruit of the tree of knowledge was in my soul.
- e) For me, it required an entire rewiring, a thorough deliverance from living by the tree of knowledge. And to be honest, I am still in the process of being delivered fully from this tree, for it runs deep in the human psyche.
- f) If you want to live from Christ's indwelling life, you must be delivered fully from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You must be delivered from living for God so you can live by the Spirit.

Living By the Tree of Knowledge

- a) After Adam ate the forbidden fruit, he, and all humanity after him, plunged into a new way of living. Thousands of years later, the human race has become like God, knowing good and evil, right and wrong, apart from God.
- b) Watchman Nee referred to this as the principle of right and wrong. Let me explain.
- c) For the Jew, the 613 commandments of the law define what is right and wrong in Yahweh's eyes. The various "you musts" and "thou shalt," scattered throughout the Torah, must be obeyed by the Jew with all of their strength and effort.
- d) For the Muslim, the Koran defines what is right and wrong in Allah's eyes. Summarized by the five pillars—the declaration of faith, daily prayer, giving, fasting, and pilgrimage to Mecca—these core requirements define good. And failing to keep these five pillars is, by default, considered evil.
- e) For the humanist, the spirit of the age defines what is right and wrong in the culture's eyes. Because truth is relative, the mantra of "to each his own" drives what is morally good and evil. Under this

humanistic moral code, love is love. And what is love in one person's eyes, defines what is good to them. Those with a different definition of love, who don't accept the culturally accepted norm, are considered to be judgmental, intolerant bigots. And thus evil.

Christian Legalism

- a) This dynamic is even at play in much of Christianity. Many believers take the New Testament commandments, which give the knowledge of good and evil, and live like an old covenant Jew. They exert their best energy and effort, by the power of the soul, to obey these commandments.
- b) In the eyes of many believers, the goal of Christianity is to do good and avoid evil by living from the knowledge of Scripture. They exert their best efforts to be a good Christian and live a moral life.
- c) If they succeed in adhering to the New Testament's moral code, they feel a sense of self-righteousness. And if they fail, they experience guilt, shame, and condemnation. This lifestyle is what many call legalism or Christian moralism.
- d) For example, good is defined by loving your neighbor as yourself, tithing, reading the Bible daily, praying regularly, fasting, and witnessing. Evil is defined as lust, pride, gossip, and judgment, just to name a few.
- e) Please don't misunderstand what I am saying. Most definitely the New Testament commandments are requirements for us to obey from the heart in motive, thought, and deed. That's not in question. The real question is what source are you living from in order to fully obey God's exacting requirements—self or Christ?

Most Live by the Tree of Knowledge

- a) Whether a Jew, Muslim, legalistic Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, New Ager, or humanist, all have a moral code of what they deem right and wrong and they live by this set of rules in the power of the soul, whether knowingly or unknowingly.
- b) The soul's conscience is the driving force behind this principle of living by right and wrong.
- c) When they hit the mark, the soul's conscience feeds the mind and emotions with a sense of self-righteousness.
- d) When they miss the mark, the soul's conscience feeds the mind and emotions with a plaguing sense of guilt, shame, and condemnation—a haunting feeling of low self-esteem and self-worth that imprisons the soul and suppresses the spirit.
- e) In summary, here's what living by the tree of knowledge looks like. It is:
 - Fueled by mental knowledge;
 - Driven by knowing what is good and right and evil and wrong;
 - Independent, self-reliant living;
 - Doing what you know is good and right by your own independent self-effort;
 - Avoiding what you know is evil and wrong by your own independent self-effort;
 - Feeling self-righteous when you do good and avoid evil;
 - Feeling guilt, shame, and condemnation when you fail to do good and avoid evil.

- f) Since the Spirit of life dwells within you, you don't have to live by the tree of knowledge any longer. You have been delivered from living for God and can now live by God. You can live by the tree of life.
- g) All this in mind, read again what Paul said to the Romans: "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10).
- h) Considering all that has been presented so far, here's the Bryan Kessler (the BKK) translation of this verse: "Living by His indwelling life delivers us from: (1) the source of sin, which is our flesh, and (2) the way of living, which was embedded into the human psyche by the tree of knowledge."

Living from the Tree of Life

- a) "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28), Jesus said to a Jewish culture saddled with 613 commandments in the Torah.
- b) He continued, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:29-30).
- c) Jesus was not speaking to those who were tired and weary from an exhausting week of working, parenting, and trying their best to make it to the weekend. Nor was Jesus merely offering refreshment and peace.
- d) Though you can certainly apply His statement to physical and emotional exhaustion, Jesus was speaking about the heavy burden of the law and living for God in the power of the soul.
- e) Jesus offered the Jews of His day—and Christians today—deliverance from living for God, imbedded into the soul of every person through the tree of knowledge.
- f) For centuries, the law of Moses weighed upon the shoulders of the Israelites, burdening them with external commandments impossible to fully obey. Most Israelites were emotionally and mentally scarred by guilt, shame, and condemnation.
- g) They could never do enough to be accepted by God, be holy, or please Him. Their consciences were haunted by the righteous and holy requirements of the law. They were ever striving, in self-effort, to do good and avoid evil.
- h) But Jesus offered them—and by implication us—rest for the soul.

Rest for the Soul

- a) Rest for the soul means no longer living for God through self-effort in the power of the soul but living from God by relational dependence upon Him.
- b) In essence, Jesus invited you to change the life source from which you live. To exchange living by self-life in the soul for living by His indwelling life in your spirit.
- c) In these three verses, Jesus flipped over the tables of old-covenant living, inviting you into a radically different life.
- d) In these three verses, Jesus offers you a choice. You can continue living from the tree of knowledge by trying to do good and avoid evil based upon your knowledge of Scripture. Or you can live from Him as the tree of life by relational dependence upon the indwelling Spirit.
- e) You can now come to Jesus and experience a deeply personal relationship with Him. Jesus invites you to walk with Him day by day, moment by moment, through your spirit-to-Spirit union with Him.

- f) Knowing Jesus intimately yokes you together with a Person rather than tablets of stone.

A Deeper Obedience

- a) Jesus inaugurated a new era—one of love-based obedience from the spirit by the power of the indwelling Spirit.
- b) Those who follow this principle of life will keep the requirements of the moral law, fully obeying God's righteous standards from the heart (see Rom. 8:4).
- c) Jesus told His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount, "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). Many scholars believe that the righteousness that surpasses the scribes and Pharisees refers to internal righteousness—obeying God's commandments from the heart in thought, motive, and deed.
- d) Therefore, the external commandments of "you musts" and "thou shalts" have been superseded by an internal work of God—a work in you that you could never do, enabling you to obey what only Jesus could ever obey.
- e) By the Holy Spirit coming to reside within you, you can now experience a relationship with Christ, leading to affection-based obedience in the power of God's unearned, unmerited enabling grace.
- f) The era of obedience defined by knowledge accumulation, behavior modification, external compliance, and bodily restraint ended at the cross.
- g) Jesus inaugurated a new way of obedience—centered upon an internal, life-based, dependency upon Him through your relationship with the indwelling Spirit.
- h) Obedience under grace is not only concerned with how you obey, but the depth at which you obey.

Taking On Jesus' Yoke

- a) For those unfamiliar with a yoke, it was a wooden bar which fastened together two animals, such as oxen, for working together and thus increasing the productivity of the labor. It was heavy and associated with hard work.
- b) Unlike the harsh and heavy yoke of external commandments, Jesus' yoke "is easy" and His "burden is light" (Matt. 11:30). And like two oxen yoked together, taking on Jesus' yoke places you next to Him, close enough to hear His whispers.
- c) Being yoked to Jesus, therefore, refers to relational dependence upon Him, where you are so close to Him you can hear His gentle voice and sense the faintest pulse of His heart.
- d) Contrary to the harsh and heavy burden of external commandments, where you give it your best teeth-gritting self-effort to live holy and to be accepted by God, Jesus offers you His yoke.
- e) Now, you no longer have to live for God in your own strength. Christ can live in you and through you. The external has been replaced by the internal. You can now live by an experiential and deeply personal relationship with Him.
- f) Being yoked to Jesus is a metaphor, alluding to your spirit-to-Spirit union with Him through the indwelling Spirit.
- g) This lifestyle begins when you come to Him in you—in your spirit where you are joined to Him spirit to Spirit. Here, in the holy of holies of the new temple, you come to Him and you "learn from" Him (Matt. 11:29). Or as the KJV translates this, you learn of Him.

- h) Being yoked to Jesus is a new way to live. It's a new lifestyle of internal, life-based, relational dependence upon Him. This is living from the tree of life.

A New Life of Relational Dependence

- a) Let me ask you a few questions:

- Are you tired of always trying to perform for God?
- Are you weary from striving in your own strength to meticulously keep every commandment, struggling to be good and do good?
- Are you exhausted from all your effort to do right and avoid wrong based upon what you know?
- Do you always feel like you must do more for God to like you, love you, and accept you?

- b) If so, then I have good news for you. You can take the harsh and heavy yoke of performance-based Christianity off your shoulders. You can come to Jesus with no agenda, no plans, no prayer list . . . nothing but yourself. And you can experience a deeply personal, experiential relationship with Him through the indwelling Spirit.

- c) You don't come to Him in heaven. You come to Him where He now dwells on earth—in His earthly temple. You come to Him in the holy of holies of your spirit. You now have access to Christ internally, where you can commune with Him all day every day.

- d) When you come to Him—not to gain head knowledge that enlarges your brain but to receive revelation knowledge that enlarges your heart—you will come to know Him as He is truly is.

- e) Christ Himself, through the indwelling Spirit, will teach you about Himself. He will reveal Himself to you. The indwelling Spirit will bring you into what T. A. Sparks called "the school of Christ," where the Spirit unveils the true Jesus to you—not the imposter preached in many churches today.

- f) In the school of Christ, you will see Him, know Him, and gain a true and precise knowledge of Him through relational experience (see Eph. 1:17-18). You will become thoroughly acquainted with Him and realize how meek and humble He is.

- g) Jesus is the ultimate servant who enjoys serving you—not just being served by you.

- h) When you take this yoke of intimacy with Christ upon you, your burden will be easy and light. And you will enter into God's rest. You will find rest for your soul. Meaning you will no longer live from self-life in your soul, but you will live from Christ's indwelling life in your spirit.

- i) You will experience deliverance from the tree of knowledge and will live instead by the tree of life. You will live from God rather than for God. And you will be empowered to obey all of Jesus' commandments.

- j) Come to Him in you and experience this new way of living. Come to Him in you and experience the relational dependence of living by Christ's indwelling life.