

SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

Text book: "The Normal Christian Life" by Watchman Nee.

Examining the words in the title of the course: LIFE; the Greek word is zoe, which means life, motion, activity; that which is alive in contrast to that which is dead, that which is eternal (never-ending) in contrast to that which is temporary and transient, and that which is moving (vibrant) in contrast to that which is inactive and stagnant. Jesus illustrated "life eternal" by the expression "living water" (John 4:10). "Living water" is that which is moving, active (even though slowly and gently--see Isa. 8:6) rather than that which is stagnant (not moving, and thus foul and impure), debris laden and insect infested. Living water FLOWS from the throne (Rev. 22:1). God accused His people in Jer. 2:13 of committing two evils: "they have forsaken me the fountain (source) of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." In His providence, God ordained that there would be two seas in the land of Palestine. One (the sea of Galilee) is "living", filled with fish, abounding with vegetation around its shores; the other (the dead sea) is just that: dead, stagnant, with no fish swimming in it and no vegetation growing around it. Water flows into and also out (thus "moving" and "living"); water flows into the dead sea but remains (and stagnates) there. Galilee (meaning "a circle") is called "Galilee of the nations" by the prophet (Isa. 9:1-2), showing that symbolically it portrays the Gentile nations throughout the circuitous area of the whole earth who would receive LIFE through Christ, but the dead sea symbolizes the Jews who have remained in a state of spiritual deadness through refusing Christ. Jesus performed no works at the dead sea, but taught and performed many mighty works around and on the sea of Galilee.

Jesus came that we might have LIFE (eternal) and have it more abundantly (John 10:10). When tempted by the devil, Jesus said, "man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Mt. 4:4). Thus we see Jesus' emphasis on receiving LIFE and learning how to LIVE. We must be Christ centered (He is the SOURCE of all life) but we must be LIFE oriented, studying the Bible as a source-book of LIFE, for the Word of God is "LIVING and ACTIVE (energetic, effective, efficacious, and creative; able to produce in experience what it proclaims)"; see Heb. 4:14, NAS Version. Underlying every Bible doctrine is a basic principle of life that God wants us to understand, and which He wants to INTEGRATE into our life experience, "writing" it upon the "tablets of the heart" (see II Cor. 3:3), with His own "finger" (Spirit). The Bible is a vast storehouse of TREASURES, and we are in a continuous quest; searching, seeking, probing, digging, that we might find the "nuggets" of TRUTH to integrate into our lives and BUILD, as it were, with "gold, silver and precious stones" (I Cor. 3:12). We are to seek for wisdom, knowledge and understanding as for "hid treasures" (Prov. 2:4), and Paul declares that in Christ are "hid all the TREASURES of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). See also Mt. 13:52.

Jesus defines life: "This IS life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). "Life" consists in a vital, meaningful RELATIONSHIP to the SOURCE of life. It is a "living relationship" based on LOVE, for God is love (I John 4:8). To KNOW Him is to LOVE Him. He is the "altogether lovely" one. We love Him because He first loved us (I John 4:19). Love motivated God to create beings that He could love and who could return that love. Love is behind His redemption (Rom. 5:8). The two greatest needs in our lives are to love and be loved. Love is the greatest motivating force in the universe. "To live is to love"--not only God, but also others; to be vitally and meaningfully related to others who also partake of the eternal life of God and who are beginning to manifest His nature and attributes, and also are beginning to see His purpose fulfilled in their lives (see Rom. 8:28-29). We saw above that Jesus spoke of "living water", which means there must be a continual FLOW, both from God to us, and from us to God; both a receiving and a giving, in a living, love relationship. His life and love are IN us as a "well (fountain) springing up" (John 4:14) to become a "river flowing out" (John 7:38), unto Him and unto others.

What life is not. "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Lk. 12:15). Here Jesus not only says that "life" (eternal, blessed, and abundant) cannot be found in material things or the pursuit of material things, but He also introduces the PROBLEM or FORCE that can KEEP people from ENTERING INTO LIFE. He says "beware of covetousness". When Adam and Eve fell from their pristine estate of innocence, there was unleashed within them a corrupt desire nature, which drives a person to "lust" (desire, covet) after things which will lead to destruction, sorrow, and death. In the New Testament, this "fallen nature" within man is called "flesh" (Gr. *sarx*). Paul calls it the "law of sin" working in our inner being (Rom. 7:23). The physical body becomes the instrument to carry out the desires of the "flesh", but the actual corrupt desire nature of fallen man is rooted in the soul (our mental-emotional being). In our study we shall see that one of the provisions that Christ has made for us in His death upon the cross is DELIVERANCE from the "dominion" of that sin nature, and VICTORY over the temptations that would lead us into wrong desires and keep us from experiencing the FULLNESS of the LIFE that Christ has made available to us. We want to learn how to grow and develop into "spiritual" Christians, rather than "fleshly" (carnal) Christians who remain in an immature, "baby" state (see I Cor. 3:1).

From position to experience. If we are to enter into the abundant life in Christ, we must understand how "positional truth" is translated into "experiential truth". Position has to do with our "legal" inheritance in Christ; what Christ has "purchased" for us and made available to us because we belong to Him. It is seeing ourselves as God sees us "In Christ"; that is, legally and positionally UNITED with Him. Where He is, we are also, raised and seated with Him in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6); and what is His, is now OURS, as joint-heirs with Him (Rom. 8:17), with all of the provisions, privileges, blessings, rights, and powers of that inheritance (see Rom. 8:32, I Cor. 3:21-23, Eph. 1:3, 11). Experiential truth is that truth which has become ours in experience. It is that part of our inheritance in Christ which we have personally possessed, so that we have actually entered into the reality of it. We might illustrate the above in two ways. First, Israel was given the land of Canaan by God. God told them it was theirs; their inheritance. They didn't have to earn it, work for it, deserve it, etc., for it was God's GIFT to them, just as everything Christ has purchased for us on the cross is His GIFT to us. God caused the Israelites to pass through the Jordan river and take up a POSITION in the LAND that was THEIRS; they were IN it, camped at Gilgal on the west bank of Jordan. But from that POSITION, they had to actually go INTO the land and POSSESS IT (make it theirs by experience). But there were enemies in the land, determined to keep them OUT. Even so is this a type of how God has allowed Satan and his demonic forces to test and challenge out faith and determination to possess what is ours in Christ. The tribes of Canaan had made "strongholds", built around idolatry, which the children of Israel were to break down and destroy through the power of God. This is a type of the strongholds of the "flesh" in our own lives through which Satan works, and which are to be "cast down" through the mighty working of God in our lives. (see II Cor. 10:3-5). A second way we might illustrate the truth we are considering is by the human family. When a baby is born, it is placed IN the family, and has by virtue of that birth and inheritance; a legal position in that family, and potentially all that belongs to the parents, and all that they can provide for him is HIS. But the babe must grow and come to the place where he is capable of understanding, appropriating and actually experiencing what is His by right of birth.

SPIRIT. We can live the Spirit-filled life only as we understand and experience the ministry and work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the CONNECTING LINK between positional truth and experiential truth. It is the Holy Spirit's MINISTRY to "take the things of Christ" (all the provisions of our inheritance in Him) and make them real and effective in our experience. (see John 16:13-15). In order to have "life", we must be vitally related or "plugged in" to the Source of life (Jesus Christ), but the Holy Spirit provides the "channel" or "current" to CONVEY to us and make real in our experience all that Christ has for us. The MINISTRY of the Holy Spirit is so vital that we find in the New Testament the following aspects of His work. (see next page).

1. Conviction by the Spirit (John 16:8-11, Mt. 5:25).
2. Drawing by the Spirit (John 6:44, 12:32).
3. Born of the Spirit (John 3:3-7, Titus 3:5-6).
4. Baptized and filled with the Spirit (Mt. 3:11, Mk. 24:49, Acts 1:5, 2:4, etc.).
5. Revelation of truth by the Spirit (John 16:13, I Cor. 2:9-13, Eph. 1:17-18).
6. Worship in the Spirit (John 4:23-24, Eph. 5:18-19).
7. Live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25, Rom. 8:4-6).
8. Led by the Spirit (Rom. 8:14).
9. Warfare by the Spirit (Ephes. 6:10-18).
10. Fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, Phil. 1:11, Eph. 5:9, James 3:17-18).
11. Gifts and manifestations of the Spirit (I Cor. 12:4-11, Rom. 8:11, I John 2:20, 27).
12. Ministry by the Spirit (II Cor. 3:6, 8, I Cor. 2:4-5).
13. Prayer in the Spirit (Eph. 6:18, Rom. 8:26).
14. Sanctified by the Spirit (Rom. 15:16, II Thess. 2:13, I Pet. 1:2).
15. Strengthened by the Spirit (Eph. 3:16, 6:10, Col. 1:11).

Type: The Old Testament type shows us that the Israelites received their inheritance through the ministry of Moses. But Moses appointed a successor (Joshua) to actually lead the people into the possession (experience) of their inheritance. Even so, our inheritance has come through Jesus, but He appointed a successor (the Holy Spirit) to lead us into the experience of our inheritance. But this comes gradually, over a period of time, and we are particularly going to examine the steps in the "path of progress" given by Watchman Nee in his book: "knowing, reckoning (by faith), presenting ourselves to God, walking in the Spirit, and bearing the cross."

FILLED. The Spirit "filled" life means more than one particular experience. It indicates the potential which Paul refers to in Eph. 3:19: "that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." What a tremendous goal! The work of the Holy Spirit is to fill up, make full, fulfill, or bring to fullness in us the very nature, character, attributes and glory of God. Paul expresses it in Gal. 4:19 this way: "until Christ be formed in you." The Greek word translated "formed" (morphoo) comes from a root word which indicates the "adjustment of parts". Thus WITHIN US, by the working of God's Spirit, there is taking place an "adjustment" or REshaping of the "inner man", so that the very NATURE of Christ is being fashioned, shaped and formed in us, until we come to "the measure of the stature of the FULLNESS of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

Pray. Let us pray that God will give us the grace to be increasingly motivated with determination to "press in" more fully into the inheritance which is ours in Christ, that His fullness might become an increasingly reality in us. Our motivation will be even greater as we are illumined to see, not just what Christ is to me, as my inheritance, but also what I am to Him, as His inheritance (see Eph. 1:18). It is not just what I have at stake in Christ, but what He has at stake in me as a part of His Spiritual Body, for Paul declares that the church is HIS FULLNESS (Ephes. 1:23).