

JOKE: A drunk stumbles along a baptismal service on Sunday afternoon down by the river. He proceeds to walk down into the water and stand next to the Preacher.

The minister turns and notices the old drunk and says, "Mister. Are you ready to find Jesus?"

The drunk looks back and says, "Yes, Preacher, I sure am."

The minister then dunks the fellow under the water and pulls him right back up. "Have you found Jesus? The preacher asked.

"Nooo, I didn't said the drunk.

The preacher then dunks him under for quite a bit longer, brings him up and says, "Now, brother, have you found Jesus?"

"Nooo, I did not Reverend."

The preacher in disgust holds the man under for at least 30 seconds this time, brings him out of the water and says in a harsh tone, "My good man have you found a Jesus yet?"

The ole drunk wipes his eyes and says to the preacher. . .”Are you sure this is where he fell in?”

Living by the Spirit part 6– Self Control

Let me start off with reminding you of a few points that have been made in this series thus far.

First thing for you to remember is that you were created in the image of God. We have a Spirit, Soul, and Body. And as I mentioned last week, one part is not good and another part evil.

They were all created by God and have their function and purpose, as a matter of fact the Scripture lets us know that after God created everything else He created man and said this is very good. Every other thing God created it always ended with, “it was good.” But after God created man in His own image He looked and was pleased and said, “it is very good.”

So the issue is not which is good or bad, but rather making sure it is in the right order. God is a God of order and when things are in order life flows. When they get out of order that is when we have chaos and confusion.

Today I want just like last week to reinforce that the soul is not a bad thing. The Apostle John the one that may have known the heartbeat of God better than any other of the Apostles said in 3 John chapter 1 verse 2.

3 John 2 (KJV 1900) - ² Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

God wants us to prosper but it's more than just money, it's so much more than that. John lets us know that I want you to be in health and prosper even as your soul prospers.

Church I want to establish with you once again your soul is not wicked. If you recall I mentioned that the soul is your mind, will, and emotions.

So here John is saying I want your mind to prosper, I want your will, your emotions to prosper. I believe that as our soul prospers every area of our life will prosper as a result of that.

Your health, your finances, your marriage, your business, should all prosper.

One of the things I want to emphasize today is in order to keep our soul healthy, we have got to try and constantly think as God thinks.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus - That is the Word church. That is Scripture.

So let me ask you a question can you show me in Scripture where God thinks LACK. Let me tell you, you won't find that anywhere. That is not even in His concept. Show me where God thinks decrease. The only time you see decrease is in us decreasing ourselves so that He can increase in us. John the Baptist said it well.

John 3:30 (NIV): He must become greater; I must become less."

Show me where God shrinks back because a situation arose.
Show me where God pulls back because the circumstances aren't right.

See Proverbs lets us know that as a man thinks in his heart so is he. Your mind and the way that you think and the way that your emotions lead you is what you will become.

Your mindset and your perception of God will determine how you live.

If you think He's up there in a bad mood just hoping that you will blow it so He can beat you over the head, you will always be walking around cowardly, scared and afraid. But when it dawns on you and let me say this loud and clear. **THAT GOD IS GOOD.** It changes how you live.

Let me remind you He is for you and not against you. He loves us regardless of how stupid our choices are sometimes. And when you begin to believe that you will walk in fresh confidence. Even when you blow it you will get up quickly because you know He is there to help you.

See we need to change some of our thinking to become like Him.

Here's an analogy that I think will help us understand this whole connection of the soul and spirit thing:

Our soul is the thermometer, our Spirit is the thermostat.

The thermometer tells us the condition of the atmosphere, it tells us the temperature in the room, but it cannot control the temperature of the room. The Spirit or the thermostat actually is what controls the temperature.

We say it feels cool in here and we go over and we look at the thermostat and the thermostat tells us what the temperature is.

And there are times when I think boy its hot in here and I will go look at the thermostat and if I think it needs to be adjusted I don't say to the thermostat OK it's hot make it cooler. No I adjust the thermostat to the desired temperature. Ok now technology can do something like that, but you know what I mean.

Here's the point I want to make with the analogy, we have to listen to our soul. Not let it control us, but listen none the less. Let me explain what I'm talking about.

Colossians 3:15 says it this way:

Let me make this statement before I read this Scripture. When our relationship with the Lord is not that strong our soul becomes unsettled and disturbed. And God built us that way, so that whenever we are not walking in obedience He allows us to get frustrated and all of a sudden worry starts setting in, anxiety starts setting in and He isn't doing this to punish us He's doing it to get our attention so that He can detour us from the path we are on and help us to get to the path we should be on so that we can walk in and have the abundant life He has promised.

See He allows our soul to get anxious, he allows us to experience things like worry and fear because He's trying to get our attention and if we don't listen to those emotions we can get shipwrecked.

Look what Colossians 3:15 says and I want to read it from the NIV and then the Message Bible

Colossians 3:15 (NIV) - ¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Colossians 3:15 (The Message) - ¹⁵Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness.

Peace comes from Christ, Christ is the anointed one. Listen when we walk in obedience to the Lord he gives us a peace and it doesn't come from the circumstances around you. It comes from Him.

Let this peace rule in your heart. Listen we ought to always be walking in the peace of God. And let me tell you something that has nothing to do with your circumstances. Let me say this there have been times in my life that I felt like all hell was braking out around me. I mean there's troubles and trials both personal, ministerial, all around me and all of a sudden I will have a supernatural peace in spite of the circumstances. I wish a I could tell you it always happens, it should be that way, but I'm still growing in that area as well.

And yet there are other times when it seems like everything is perfect around me, everything's going great and yet my gut is all disturbed inside. And it usually occurs when I have let my guard down and I have gotten slack with my intimacy with Jesus and I begin to drift. And because the Lord loves me so much and doesn't want me drifting He wants my attention an uneasiness comes so that I can get back on track and call out to Him.

He says let the peace of God rule in your heart.

Listen that thermostat must be connected to a thermometer in order to function and listen to me carefully we must pay attention to our soul, but we don't let the soul govern us. That's the difference.

Listen you can love Jesus with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and still have a nervous breakdown.

And you think you need to fast more and pray more and read your Bible more. No you need a vacation. After all doesn't the Scripture say don't become weary in well doing.

Listen to ignore your emotions is to ignore the very signs that God put in your life to guide you.

Can I say this? We are not being spiritual by suppressing our feelings. We need to pay attention to our feelings and then take the information we are getting from them to the Spirit in order for Him to give us the direction of how to fix the problem.

Listen if you just suppress your feelings, that is not being spiritual that is denial and you are lying to yourself. And it will get you in trouble.

If your body is exhausted take a nap. If you're hungry go get yourself something to eat. If you're thirsty go get a drink of water. And if your emotions are messed up you better listen to them, but you don't let them govern your behavior. You take it to the Spirit and say Spirit you know the answer to this problem.

Our emotions which is our soul is like road signs on the road of life, and there are some road signs that are warning signs and they are there to get our attention. (In Canada using a cell phone in the front seat not just the driver – big fine if caught).

Maybe it's a warning sign you are going in the wrong direction. Some of those negative signs you need to listen to may be fear. (snake sign in Texas on golf course – explain Jon going to look for my ball). And by the way I'm talking about an unhealthy fear.

What do you mean unhealthy fear pastor? Good question glad you asked. (Afraid if walking down the street at all, etc.). Talk also about healthy fear (taking risks for God. Peter, etc.)

Maybe a negative sign is frustration, resentment, hopelessness, hatred, anger, criticism, a negative attitude.

Listen church if you struggle with some of those negative road signs it is something you better pay attention too. Because if you just suppress them and plow through you are on your way to a train wreck.

Just like there are negative signs there are also positive signs. There are positive signs that God puts inside your soul that reaffirms that you are on the right path. Everything around you is falling to pieces, everyone around you thinks you're an idiot and you've lost your mind, but there is a peace of God that rules in your heart. And you say I know it doesn't make natural sense, but I'm telling you in my gut I know this is what God says. (Woman doing handstand against pole at store).

See there are positive signs like vision, joy, love, hope, rest, peace these are things that when we are going in the right direction and we're walking in obedience and it has nothing to do with your natural surroundings it has everything to do with what is inside of you.

God created your soul and I don't want us to think that our soul is a negative thing. Listen to it, just don't obey it, obey the Spirit.

Can I tell you I believe one of the major keys is always keeping Jesus first.

Psalm 37:4 (NIV) - ⁴Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

I think many get this passage wrong. Many read this passage and say if you delight yourself in the Lord He will give you whatever it is that you want. That is not what it is saying.

If we will put Jesus first and if we will love Him first if we give God first attention, He knows why you were created, He knew your purpose in life and He knew you would not be any good at what you are supposed to do unless you had a desire to do it.

If you will delight yourself in God He knows the purpose and the plan for you after all He created you. Who do you think gave you the desire to do the things you want to do? Desire to travel, Jesus just wants to come along for the ride. Desire for a family, Jesus just wants to be the first love.

See we make God's will so difficult. His ways are much higher than our ways. And that's true. However God loves us so much that he comes down to our level. When I talk to a 3 year old I get down to their level (show them). I don't make a 3 year old come up to my level. God knows where you are at and how He needs to talk with you so that you can understand His will for your life.

So let me talk about self-control for a moment. Proverbs says this:

Proverbs 25:28 (NIV) - ²⁸ Like a city whose walls are broken down is a person who lacks self-control.

Now that passage of Scripture doesn't mean a whole lot to us in our modern day talk. Truth be told even us that understand it theologically it still really doesn't have the impact as it did for those that lived in those days. Because their entire safety and well-being was based upon the walls that were built around the city.

The walls were the main protection from keeping the enemy from coming in while they were resting or doing whatever. The walls protected them from the enemy entering in and destroying them.

And he said just like a city without walls is totally exposed to the attack of the enemy just like that is a man or a woman who has no self-control.

They could leave a dynamic anointed powerful service, just full of the Spirit and before they get out to the car because of lack of self-control they could be cussing out their wife, husband or kids. From here to the car, why? no walls. No self-control. The enemy comes in and he has a hay day with your mind, he has a hay day with your emotions because one thing didn't go exactly like you intended it to go.

We cry God why don't you treat me like everyone else, your blessing everyone else when is it my turn. Truth is you're not that special friend.

You think He treats you different than everyone else, let me say something God is good to you. He's good to everyone rather you serve Him or not He's good to you. Your breathing today aren't

you. You all have clothes on, thank God for that. He's good to you. You're not so special that He's going to treat you different than everybody else. He doesn't treat you differently, He treats you uniquely, and there's a difference. He knows just what you need, at just the right time. (Give examples, Christmas gifts, etc).

But the problem is we have no walls, no self-discipline the devil has a hay day and we don't understand we live in the flesh, but we don't war after the flesh but the weapons of our warfare are mighty through God for the pulling down of strongholds, casting down every thought and every imagination.

Listen a person without self-control doesn't need to get more spiritual they need to get more self-control.

I find this interesting in Acts 24 and just so you know this is the season when which Paul is being thrown from one prison to another, from one leader to another and he's been in prison for preaching the gospel. And he comes to a guy underneath the ruling of a governor of the area named Felix. And I find some fascinating things in here:

Verse 24 of that chapter Acts 24:24 (NIV) - ²⁴ Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus.

Remember what's happening here. Paul is a prisoner Felix is a governor and he sends for Paul to listen to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. That is fascinating to me and it also convicts me. Because in all honesty if I'm Paul and the governor calls for a personal one on one with me and he wants to hear from me, listen I apologize that I'm not as spiritual as Paul, maybe you are, but I'm not so sure my first thing to the governor would be talking

about Christ. I would probably be talking about how I am being unjustly persecuted. How I do not belong in prison I have not broken any rules I do not deserve to be here and you have the power to get me out. And so if want to listen to me I'm going to take advantage of this opportunity to fight for my freedom. Because after all I need to get out there and preach the gospel. NOT PAUL.

Paul understood his life was not about himself it was about Jesus. And even though he had perfect opportunity time and time again to present his case to Felix the governor who could have released him, we see no evidence of him going there. But every time he comes into his presence all he wants to talk about is this faith that he has in Christ Jesus. Amazing.

He goes on to say in verse 25 - Acts 24:25 (NIV) - ²⁵ As Paul talked about righteousness, self-control and the judgement to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you."

Paul talked about three things: righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come. I wonder how Paul would be received in the American church I say that because I know people that don't want to hear about righteousness any more, people sure don't want to hear about self-control because we want to blame everyone else for our problems.

Can I say something God says you reap what you sow, if you don't like your life change what you're planting. Stop blaming mom, stop blaming grandpa, stop blaming your boss we need to learn that self-control is important (talk about road rage – no self-control).

And this is what I find fascinating Paul is preaching about righteousness who is the prisoner here? Paul. Who's the governor Felix. Paul is preaching about righteousness, self-control and judgment and watch what the Bible says: Felix was afraid

Who's the prisoner? I mean it's like wait a minute in normal situations if a prisoner is called in by the governor who has the authority to determine the future of his life he's going to stand before that governor with fear and trembling hoping to have favor in the governor's eyes.

That's not the situation here because Paul recognized he was more than just a prisoner he was an ambassador of the Living God. And it wasn't that Felix had his future in his hands he had Felix's future in his hands.

And he walks in there and preached the gospel to the point that Felix had a total role reversal. Listen church we just need to preach the gospel. Felix is afraid of a prisoner.

He was afraid and it continued, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you."

When I find it, I've heard that before. Like you're going to come to God on your terms.

When God convicts us we need to move on that conviction. Give me a few years to find myself, then in three years I will get married and come to church and raise a happy family.

You don't come to God on your terms, it's the day you hear His voice don't harden your heart.

When I find it convenient, I will send for you.” He goes on in verse 26 - ²⁶ At the same time he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe. . . .“

Paul is coming in and preaching the gospel to such a point that Felix can't handle it he's under conviction and says I can't handle in more get out of here. A few weeks go by he gets his composure back he called Paul back because he's greedy he wants money because his god is money.

And he calls hoping that Paul would give him a bribe and so as a result he would send for him often? He sent for him frequently and talked with him.

Listen I think there was some crookedness in the jailhouse. Maybe someone had to pull Paul aside and let him know Paul there is a reason he keeps calling you and if you will just give him a little bit of money that's all he's wanting, if you'll just give him a little bit of money you will be outta here. Now that's not in Scripture, and I want to be careful not to add that to it, but could it be that is how it worked.

Maybe Felix even sent a messenger to him and said tell him, he's a little slow in this department he's so Godly he doesn't even understand wickedness.

But Paul was not concerned about his freedom, Paul was concerned about Felix. And he sent for him frequently and talked with him. Paul never brought him a bribe and when two years have passed. Help us Lord – We want an instant Jesus if two weeks go by we wonder why God hasn't answered. Two years in prisons and still no release and Felix was succeeded by Festus

but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews he left Paul in prison.

But here this the scary thing to me in 2 Timothy chapter 3 it says this 2 Timothy 3:1–4(NIV) - But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. ²People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control,

We live in a day and age where there is very little self-control. We go to McDonalds every day and we become overweight and unhealthy and we blame the restaurant. No it was a lack of self-control. It isn't societies fault. We want to blame everyone except take responsibility for ourselves. Listen we are in a season that self-control is not popular.

The Scriptures continue: their brutal, not lovers of the good, ⁴treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power.

Let me just say I see this totally different than I used to because I have always looked at that passage right there they don't have power to heal the sick, no power to see signs wonders and miracles, and I do believe it entails that, but I also think many Christians don't have power to have self-control over themselves.

We want to do great and mighty things for God and we can't even control our own behavior.

Lack of self-control, listen there are people who can quote the Scripture and have all the Christianize down to a science, but

can't control their temper, can't control their attitude, always filled with worry and fret. Where is the power that goes with the form.

He says have nothing to do with them. Isn't that fascinating? Hang out with the sinners at least their being honest, that's what Jesus did.

I want you to understand I'm not talking about stronger will power.

Remember at the beginning of this series we talked about the fact that the soul will not correct the soul. It's not more will power that you need, it's His Spirit that you need. Because it's the Spirit that will kick the soul into subjection. It's the Spirit of greater is he that is in me, and I can submit to that in me and he will curve those attitudes he will cleanse me of those things that easily beset me, he will do that.

This is the reason why in Galatians 5:22 I want to point this out to you. It says:

Galatians 5:22 - 23 (NIV) - ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

I'm not talking about stronger will power, I'm not talking about more natural disciplines that is striving in the flesh. I'm talking about letting the Spirit of God manifest the fruit of self-control.

Because you recognize Lord I have tried, and I have tried, and I have tried it's not that I don't want it. I want it. The problem is I'm still self-reliant. I even fast, but I haven't learned to enter into His rest. Next week I want to talk about entering into His rest. Oh His rest where we surrender to the Spirit of God that's in us. And His

Spirit manifests the self-control. Because as He increases I decrease.

I'm about to close Joy will you come.

I want to make this real clear church we have got to listen to the soul it's the thermometer that God put in you. But you don't let it govern you and can't rely on it to change the temperature.

A thermometer will never change the temperature in a room, you take it to the Spirit and say Spirit it's too cold in this heart right here. I need you to warm it up. And we rely on the Spirit of God.

Let me close with this passage 2 Peter 1:3 - 4 ³His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Isn't that awesome, you can participate in divine nature.

2 Peter 1:5 - 8 (NIV) - ⁵For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. ⁸For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Increasing measure that means you should have more self-control a month from now than you do now. We must always be growing.

Continue with verses 9 - 11

⁹ But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

¹⁰ Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, ¹¹ and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Don't suppress what God designed, but take it to the Spirit and let Him help you don't let the emotions govern you. But listen to what the soul is telling you and then take it to the Spirit and let Him give you direction.