

## Good News for the Fading

Romans 8:9-11

### Introduction

Do you ever feel like giving in? Throwing in the towel? Folding?

I don't know if you've been watching or joining in with Joe Wickes, who's been doing PE for the nation on YouTube. On Day 1, nearly a million people joined in with him. A week later, he had half a million. On Friday, he had 185,000. So, all the way through, people have been giving in - and that's just PE! (No offence to any PE teachers out there, or anyone who's actually attempted Joe Wicks - apparently, it's quite hard!).

If you're a Christian this morning, though: Do you ever feel like giving up as a Christian?

People expect you be strong; people expect you be sorted, but inside you just feel like giving up. Well, you're not alone. The Christian life is hard, it's a life of sacrifice, it's a life of struggles. It's a problem at all stages of the Christian life. It's not exactly the same thing, but I was reading a stat on Friday that said that 50% of pastors don't last beyond 5 years in the ministry, and a whopping 80% don't make it past 10 years. The Christian life is tough, but there is hope for us - as we'll see this morning.

This morning our title is "good news for the fading" - not from PE but from the Christian life. I struggled for a title for this one, really, I mean that this is a message for those who are experiencing battle fatigue, who are flagging, who are finding it hard in the battle against sin in their lives. The day to day struggle to keep going. Paul, the author has written this to encourage Christians to keep going! We are not alone in the battle - not only do we have each other, God has someone so close to us, helping us. In fact, he's inside us, which is our first point - the first encouragement in the battle is that the Spirit is in me.

### The Spirit is in me (v9a)

Have a look at verse 9 again:

*You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.*

God the Holy Spirit dwells in me! Stop and think about it for a second. The Spirit is not just God's force or active energy or anything like that. The Spirit is fully God; the Spirit is God as much as the Father is God, or Christ is God. God Himself lives in us. The incarnation when God the Son became a man, was huge wasn't it? That was God in the likeness of sinful flesh. But here is God dwelling in sinful flesh! - It's incredible, isn't it?

And yet the Bible says it time and again that believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. So, in 1 Corinthians 3 and 6 our bodies are described as God's temple. Just as God dwelt in a special way in the Old Testament temple so God dwells in believers -and that's all believers!

I remember at university being really surprised that there was so much confusion here. I remember on more than one occasion talking to friends who believed they were Christians but they didn't believe they had the Holy Spirit. Now, I'm not here talking about cults who teach that believers don't have the Spirit; I'm talking about believers brought up in evangelical churches. They'd had really quite sporadic teaching on the role of the Spirit, and

when I pushed them on it (very gently!) it turned out they believed the Spirit was given in a later experience. Now I'm not here denying that there might be in some way fresh experiences of the Spirit. In my view it's a disputable matter - Christians can take positions either side. But that idea of a 'second blessing' was emphasised so much to these believers that they didn't realise there was a 'first blessing', so to speak.

When you become a Christian, you receive the Holy Spirit. That's why Paul can write in our verse "Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him". That's why Paul can write elsewhere about us all having the same spirit, but differing gifts. It's not that some Christians have the Spirit and some don't. All Christians have the Spirit, but the way that He shows Himself in believers differs. He gives differing gifts to Christians, but it's the same Holy Spirit that lives in all, and that puts all Christians on a level. There are no super-Christians or super-saints, there aren't two classes of Christians - all receive the one Spirit.

Now, the Bible has various names for the Spirit being given. It is variously called the Spirit 'coming upon' someone, the Spirit being 'poured out', 'receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit' and I would argue as well 'the Baptism of the Holy Spirit'. All those phrases are used at Pentecost in Acts 2 to describe the same experience. Again, not to deny that there might be fresh experiences of the Holy Spirit, but 'Baptism of the Holy Spirit' isn't used that way in the Scripture. Everyone who is referred to as having a 'baptism in the Holy Spirit' is receiving the Spirit for the first time. So, we must be very careful of taking experiences and finding Biblical terminology to describe it.

The most important thing though to take away here, is that we must understand that all Christians have the Holy Spirit living in them.

So, how is this an encouragement? Well, here are three "C's" for you to help you think about the encouragement that this is.

First of all, "Controlling Influence". If we have the Spirit it means that we are "in the Spirit", not "in the flesh". The things that were said last week about those who are in the Spirit are true of all Christians. That means that our minds are set on the things of the Spirit. That we face no condemnation, that we can please God. Now pause there for a second, did you hear that? we are able to please God! Sometimes you'd think from listening to some Christians all we can do is disappoint God - not true, we can actually please Him! Our works will always be tainted by sin, but God can take pleasure in them if they are done in Christ, in faith, in the Spirit. Our lives as Christians don't have to be a never-ending tale of failure - we can actually please God if our works are done in faith. If the Spirit is exerting a controlling influence, then we can please God.

The second C is "Conformity to Christ". We follow in Christ's footsteps. Christ was the first human being to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It happened at His baptism. It didn't make Him God, He was already God, but He fulfilled the prophecies of the servant on whom God would pour his Spirit. So, Isaiah 42:1:

*Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.*

Or Isaiah 61:1,

*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;*

He was the servant filled with the Spirit, who was prophesied to come in the OT. And we follow in His footsteps, we continue the mission and are given the same Spirit to do it. Jesus in his humanity modelled human dependence on the Spirit to do the work of God.

That doesn't mean it's all easy: remember, the first thing that happened after His baptism was that the Spirit led him out to do battle with temptation in the wilderness. But remember, empowered by the Holy Spirit, Jesus won! So that's our second C.

And then our third C, "Confidence". As we'll see in coming weeks, the indwelling of the Spirit gives us confidence, assurance that we really are Christ's - whether that be by producing visible fruit in our lives or an inner assurance that he gives us. The Spirit is at work to remind us that we really do belong to Christ. And that's our next point.

### **Christ is mine and I am His (v9b)**

Here in our passage the Spirit is described both as the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. Now, because of how the Trinity works, if one is present then so are the other two. That's why Jesus can say, "if you have seen me you have seen the Father". And why he can say in John 14,

*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.*

And then he says in verse 18,

*"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you... In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.*

The Spirit who was among them will be in them, and Jesus will be in them. But it's not like we're indwelt by Jesus **and** the Spirit; we're indwelt by Jesus **by** the Spirit. Where the Spirit is Jesus is also, after all He is the Spirit of Christ. Now, let's get technical for a moment. The Holy Spirit proceeds from, comes from God the Father and God the Son - that's what we said earlier in the Nicene creed. The 'and the Son' bit was not there in the original creed, the western churches added it later. The East wasn't happy and split from the western churches in 1053.

But the West was right, He is the Spirit of the Father and the Son - He proceeds from both. That may sound like a technicality, but a) It split the church in half, though there were of course other factors (have a google later!), and b) It reaffirms to us that Christ really does dwell in our hearts by His Spirit, because The Holy Spirit is Christ's Spirit. The Spirit is Christ's seal on us, His mark of ownership, that's what it's saying.

I know I've used this illustration before, but I love it so much. I don't know if you like Toy Story – my boys really like Toy Story – and in Toy Story, Andy the boy in the film writes his name on the foot of each of His toys. Often when the toys are doubting what to do, they look at the writing on their foot and see that it says 'Andy'. It reminds them that they are Andy's toys.

In the same way the Spirit is Christ's mark on us. It's like he's saying: this one's mine, I've set my seal on him, I've written my name on him. The Spirit is a sign that we are His. And the passages linked to being indwelt by the Spirit are nearly always followed by passages talking about our belonging to Christ. So 1 Cor 6:19,

*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

Why should the two ideas be linked? Well, Ephesians 1:13-14,

*In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

The giving of the Holy Spirit is a guarantee, but not in the sense of a promise, so much, but more like how we use the word in financial terms. I remember being shocked when I first read this passage in a French Bible that the term there, guarantee, for the Spirit was the word 'gage'. That's where we get our word mortgage from (which I looked up this week, means 'death deposit'! Isn't that encouraging!) The Spirit is a deposit, like a deposit you put down on a house. Except God has put Him in/on us. We are His, He has bought us by Jesus' blood, and the Spirit is the down payment, so to speak, to assure us that He will take full possession when Jesus returns.

And we too will take full possession! After all our inheritance is not so much land or fields or houses or money - our inheritance is God Himself, He is ours. And the Holy Spirit living in us is a down payment until we take possession of the whole - God Himself. Christ is ours and we are His, and the Holy Spirit is the proof.

How is that an encouragement? Well, if we belong to Jesus, he will not let us go! That's how this chapter ends so I don't want to say too much now. But it builds on this truth that I belong, body heart and soul to Jesus. And because of that I am safe and secure in his love. Now, I am careless with things that are mine; I have lost countless jumpers in coffee shops, people's homes, shops. At least I assume that's where I've lost them - I've never actually found them, so I don't know! Some of them I really liked, but I've lost them. Jesus never loses those who are His; He cares for them, He looks after them.

If we belong to Jesus we are loved and we are secure in His love. He isn't going to be careless with us. He's put His deposit down on us - he will bring the act to completion. He will finally bring us home to be with him forever. And this brings us nicely to our last point. Our last encouragement; because of the indwelling of the Spirit, the Father will raise me up.

### **The Father will Raise Me Up (v10-11)**

Have a look at verses 10 and 11:

*But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.*

Again and again in these two verses the Spirit is linked with life and the resurrection. That might seem a little strange - after all Jesus was the one who rose to life. But throughout the Bible the Spirit is linked to life. Now it's helpful to understand this that in the Hebrew and the Greek the word for spirit can also mean breath or wind. The idea is there throughout the whole Bible. So right back in Genesis, When Adam is given life in Genesis 2 how does God do it? God breathes the breath of life into Adam. In Ezekiel 37 with the valley of dry bones how does God bring them to life? Ezekiel 37:9,

*Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.'"*

It's by His breath, from the winds, the same word again, the word that's used for spirit. A few verses later: Ezekiel 37:13-14,

*And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord."*

Life and resurrection come by the Spirit of God, the breath of God. And this idea continues in the New Testament, John 6:63a, *It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all.* Or 2 Corinthians 3:6b, *For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

God gives life by His Spirit. So it's fitting then in John when Jesus talks about them receiving the Spirit, he breathes on them. But there's a problem, how can the Spirit give life to us when we are so obviously mortal? We have as Paul called it in chapter 7, a body of death. That's what Paul is talking about here in verse 10. Our bodies are dead, they are mortal, they will one day die. Martin Lloyd Jones comments on this verse "The moment we enter this world and begin to live we also begin to die. Your first breath is also one of the last you will ever take! (Romans, Lloyd Jones vol 7 p69).

It's not a very cheerful thought, but it highlights the problem, how can the Spirit bring us life when actually we are all going to die? Well, Paul's answer is the resurrection. Not the resurrection of Jesus, but our resurrection. Because we have the Spirit of Life in us, our bodies will one day return to life.

Now, it took me years to get my head round this. One day everyone will be resurrected, brought back to life. Again when we said the creed earlier that's what it means by "We look for the resurrection of the dead". It's not Jesus' resurrection it's talking about, it's our resurrection!

That's why we're looking for it, it's still to come. We will all one day be brought back to life, and believers will enjoy "the life of the world to come". That is our certain hope. When I was a younger Christian it seemed like everyone spoke of going to heaven, but few spoke of the resurrection, other than Jesus's resurrection. Very few people spoke of the 'life of the world to come'. But that is our ultimate destination. Our hope is not to be disembodied floating spirits in heaven; our hope is resurrection from the dead. Heaven is a waiting place until we go there.

Jesus himself spoke of this in John 5:28-29,

*an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgement.*

Resurrection is our hope and Paul says here that the Spirit is our guarantee. More than that, He makes our resurrection a certainty. If our bodies are indwelt by the Spirit of Life, eternal life is a certainty. There is no other possible outcome. If we have the Spirit of life in our flesh, so to speak, then our bodies must live again. The Spirit of Life cannot help but bring life wherever He is. After all whose Spirit is it? God the Father, who raised Jesus bodily from the dead. That's what our verse says. You have the Spirit of the resurrector in you! His Spirit will bring us to life on the last day to live for eternity, to inherit eternal life, to inherit glory, if we are trusting in Christ!

Paul writes in Colossians 1:27, *To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

If we have the Spirit of the resurrector in us, if we have the Spirit of life in us, if we have the Spirit of Christ in us, then we can expect to be raised to eternal life at the resurrection when Jesus returns. How is this an encouragement? Because one day the battle will be over. Not because we've given in, but because we're on winning side! One day there will be no more struggle with sin. One day we will live at total peace without that battle that's within us. The old will have completely gone and we will enter into God's wonderful new creation. Now, that's got to be an encouragement to keep going, I know it is for me!

CS Lewis writes of this at the end of the final book in the Narnia series as the characters enter the new Narnia:

"Now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before."

One day there will be no flagging, no more fading. One day it will be "further up and further in" with no sore legs or aching bodies. We'll have bodies fitter than even those people who've done Joe Wicks from day one! But the most amazing thing will be that God is there. We will know Him, and we will be like Him. No more battle, no more pain.

So keep going; the Spirit is within you. Keep going; Christ is yours and you are His. Keep going; one day the Father will raise you up. And all this will have all been worthwhile. Keep going.