



**ARNA PENTECOST PODCAST 2023**  
*The Holy Spirit and Study*

**Today is Tuesday the 6<sup>th</sup> of June**, and we continue with our exploration of the Holy Spirit and study, recognising especially the vital role of the Holy Spirit as our teacher.

Yesterday we traced the gospel movement from an environment and experience of spiritual impoverishment to transformation of the mind, as identified in Romans chapters 1 and 12. Today we discern the mission of the Holy Spirit in enabling that transformation. For the next five days we will inhabit much of Romans chapter 8.

While the Spirit has certainly been at work through much of the unfolding of Paul's account of the gospel as the power of God for salvation for all who believe (Romans 1:16), by chapter 8 we reach a dramatic turning point in the mission of God. It's almost like the Holy Spirit is a dancer who has been waiting just off-stage for this big moment, and now the stage is set for a soaring entry that brings life and energy to all that is otherwise forlorn.

**With that sense of anticipation, I focus now on being drawn into God's Presence**

John 3: 5-8

*Jesus answered, "Truly I tell you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not be amazed that I told you that you must be born again. 8 The wind blows where it pleases, and you hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."*

**And so I pause and pray, using a prayer of Nicholas Ridley, bishop and martyr:**

O heavenly Father, the author and fountain of all truth,  
the bottomless sea of all understanding,  
send, we beg you, your Holy Spirit into our hearts,  
and lighten our understandings with the beams of your heavenly grace.  
We ask this, O merciful Father, for your dear Son,  
our Saviour, Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

**I Reflect.**

Towards the end of Romans 7, the Apostle Paul expresses the anguish and frustration of life lived according to the flesh: "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" – surely a cry we can all identify with! But he concludes on a positive note, giving thanks in anticipation for the solution to such

despair – a solution that is explained in chapter 8, bringing a spotlight to bear on the Holy Spirit as the game-changing actor:

*Romans 8:1-4*

*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, 2 because the principle of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the principle of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do since it was weakened by the flesh, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin offering, 4 in order that the law's requirement would be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

It is all-too-easy for the Evil One. All it takes is a whisper in my ear, that voice that trolls me in my head: who do I think I am? Who am I kidding? I know only too well my weakness and failures. I'm the first to condemn myself, with the charge of hypocrisy writ large around my neck.

It is the mission of Satan, the accuser, to reduce me to a state of despair, beyond redemption. Yet these are precisely the lies and falsehoods we are urged to set aside, for the Spirit of life releases us from such captivity:

Hear these words again. Let us sit with them, bathe in them, clothe ourselves in them:

- *there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus*
- *because the principle of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the principle of sin and death.*

### **I Challenge Myself.**

The law was never designed to empower us, to enable us to break free from the hold of sin and stubborn self-will that disregards God's instructions. So why do I keep thinking that I am more acceptable if I just observe as many of God's rules as possible? It's not that these rules are not good and right – they are – but my motivation must go deeper than a desire to escape condemnation, both God's and my own.

No, the observance of the law is good and right because it is life-giving. There is freedom in knowing I am made right with God, reconciled with God, entirely and completely through the love of God revealed in the cross and resurrection of Christ.

How do I know this? Because the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus tells me so...

### **And so I listen once again to this profound truth, instructed and assured by the Spirit:**

Romans 8:1-4

*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, 2 because the principle of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the principle of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do since it was weakened by the flesh, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin offering, 4 in order that the law's requirement would be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

I am struck again that God is revealed in action, our Tri-une God of mission:

What the law could not do, God did.

He sent his own Son so that sin has been condemned, not us.

And this becomes the principle, the driving purpose, of the Spirit of life, that we are now freed and empowered to walk according to the Spirit.

I bring to mind the evocative poem 'Spiritus' by the English poet Steve Turner:

*I used to think of you  
as a symphony  
neatly structured  
full of no surprises.  
Now I see you as  
a saxophone solo*

*blowing wildly  
into the night,  
a tongue of fire,  
flicking in unrepeated patterns.*

It is not that the Spirit is absent from our spiritually impoverished environment. The Spirit has been present from the dawn of time. It is much more the case that our culture, with its distractions, illusions and deceptions is blinding us to the presence and life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit.

I urge the people of my neighbourhood, my community, our world at large to open your eyes and see the Spirit of life about us. We need to bring life to our parched souls more than ever.

Yet I cannot declare this to the world at large if I am not receiving, embracing and truly walking the talk: waiting, discerning, heeding and walking according to the Spirit.

**I Pray.**

And now as I take these learnings into this day, I pray that the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus would remove my blindness and inattention to the ways in which he is at work in the world as I experience it, and beyond. Keep me from selective seeing and hearing; may I be still and patient enough to discern the promptings, the moments of opportunity for acts of service and engagement, and to set aside the voices and calls that are not of you.

O God of grace, I pray this confident that in your mercy you have done all that is necessary to see sin condemned once and for all, and with the assurance of freedom and fulness of life to be found on the pathway of living rightly in and through your Spirit. Amen.