



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

**Greetings this Wednesday, the 7<sup>th</sup> day of June and day 3 of this week's podcast series exploring the vital role of the Holy Spirit in enabling our study of the wisdom and ways of God.**

Today we will reflect of the Spirit's role in God's provision of a whole new, life-giving mindset that changes the way we view pretty much everything – the world in which we find ourselves, the neighbourhood we inhabit, our vocation as a creature – a human being – made in the image and likeness of God, and our calling as a follower committed to our Lord Jesus Christ.

We begin to see the world and ourselves, as God views things and it opens up a world of purpose, hope and opportunity. Through the agency of the Spirit, we see the stark contrast between what prevails in a fallen, marred and scarred world, and what might – indeed will – characterise life as intended and redeemed by God.

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

**Psalm 119:17-18**

*Deal generously with your servant  
so that I might live;  
then I will keep your word.  
Open my eyes so that I may contemplate  
wondrous things from your instruction.*

**And so I pause and pray, adapting a prayer of the American prayer advocate, Natalie Regoli:**

Holy and gracious God, you are the greatest of all. You are full of wonders that no mere human can comprehend. Lord, I seek through the working of your Holy Spirit to understand you and your ways so that I can live according to your commandments. I pray for your divine illumination in my heart and mind. Help me see what you intend for me to see. Help me understand what you intend for me to understand. Open my eyes and my ears to see you and hear your whispers. Amen.

**I Reflect.**

In chapter 8 of Paul's letter to the Romans, he outlines what has changed with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all who devote themselves to Christ.

Romans 8:5-13

*5 For those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit have their minds set on the things of the Spirit. 6 Now the mindset of the flesh is death, but the mindset of the Spirit is life and peace.*

*7 The mindset of the flesh is hostile to God because it does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it is unable to do so. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him. 10 Now if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then he who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through his Spirit who lives in you. 12 So then, brothers and sisters, we are not obligated to the flesh to live according to the flesh, 13 because if you live according to the flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

Paul describes a profound contrast between 'being in the flesh' and 'being in the Spirit.' This is both a physical, embodied sense of 'flesh' and also a metaphorical dimension of 'the flesh'. It refers to the flesh and blood reality of our existence (although not in the Greek dualistic sense) and the impact that makes on our desires, impulses and cravings – many of which may be fine, but others less so...

But Paul's use of this term also indicates the self-orientated, even self-preoccupied outlook we invariably find ourselves in. This is certainly true of myself and can similarly be true of whatever social grouping I identify with. It is an outlook of independence, as desire for autonomy and the setting aside of responsibility and accountability before God.

This is a mindset that pulls back, separates off, even chokes our willingness or capacity to deal with difference, to let go of grievance and feelings of being wronged. It is a world of winners and losers, those who prevail and those who are set aside. Paul names it as a dead end.

By contrast, Paul points to the way out of such cycles of self-preoccupation and in so doing, to adopt the new mindset that the Spirit enables, drawing us ever deeper into all that is good and life-giving in our outlook. Being 'in Christ' brings with it an experience of the Spirit that gives life, because it opens up the pathway and capacity to approach life 'rightly'. To relate rightly. To choose rightly. To act rightly, and respond rightly. Such righteousness is both a gift from God and an outworking of the Spirit of God.

### **I Challenge Myself.**

I challenge myself to receive this new mindset, to so live according to the Spirit that I have my mind set on the things of the Spirit. This is a gift freely offered and given, but I am all too likely to ignore or reject it. It means change. It means turning from my self-preoccupation and my own poorly conceived determination of what is in my best interest or what will make me feel good, and trust that the wisdom and instruction of God, informed and modelled on the way of Christ, will be a more worthy and life-giving pathway to embark upon.

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

*For those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit have their minds set on the things of the Spirit. 6 Now the mindset of the flesh is death, but the mindset of the Spirit is life and peace.*

*7 The mindset of the flesh is hostile to God because it does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it is unable to do so. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him. 10 Now if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then he who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through his Spirit who lives in you. 12 So then, brothers and sisters, we are not obligated to the flesh to live according to the flesh, 13 because if you live according to the flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

I am struck by the reference to the Spirit of God who lives in me, in us.

This is also described as our 'belonging' to the Spirit of Christ. To belong to the Spirit of Christ is to be assured he knows me, doesn't 'disown' me but will indeed advocate and intercede for me. Wow...

I bring to mind the lines of the classic hymn of Charles Wesley, 'And can it be', and especially the hope-filled fourth verse (– probably my favourite verse in any hymn!) It describes the richness of Paul's thought so evocatively:

*Long my imprisoned spirit lay  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray,  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;  
My chains fell off, my heart was free;  
I rose, went forth and followed Thee.*

### **I Pray.**

And now as I take these learnings into this day, I pray:

Almighty and life-giving God, I thank you for the depth and richness of your grace and mercy that brings that quality we cannot buy, manufacture or establish for ourselves: your peace. By being in Christ you have promised that your Spirit will bring a profound renewal and reorientation of our mind, guiding us away from the pattern and mindset that comes with being driven by impulses and preoccupations of the flesh, an approach that displaces you from the centre of life and seeks to do what seems good and pleasing to ourselves. I know this mindset does not satisfy, does not end well, and is too often simply foolish.

I open myself anew to the life of your Spirit and your amazing willingness to live within me and to take me on as a work-in-progress, despite my missteps and failings. Through your Spirit enable me to see myself as you see me, to so also see my neighbours and those who irritate me, and especially those who are disregarded or put down by others. Help me to have time for others, and to act kindly and with grace, to your glory. Amen