

A New Resident

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Our family has been looking at quite a few empty houses lately. You see, when we lived in Tennessee it was our goal to find a house here in the Lancaster area that was somewhat in the country. However, it was difficult to shop around from Tennessee, so we decided to temporarily move into an apartment. While house-hunting, we've seen all kinds of houses. Some are crowded and messy. Others are empty. Still others are immaculate. As the resident, so is the house. Today we will be talking about inviting a new resident into our house.

We've been talking a lot about our sinful DNA lately. Last week we talked about what to do with our sinful DNA. We read how Christ took our sinful DNA and crucified it. When He was sacrificed, our sinful DNA was sacrificed. Because of this, we now have a choice. We can CHOOSE to sacrifice our sinful DNA. It is wonderful to be free from our sinful DNA. But it does leave us with an empty house.

Turn with me to Matthew 12:43-45. Jesus talks about a person who has been freed from demon possession. Jesus spent a lot of time casting out demons from people. When someone was set free from the demon, they were like an empty house. If they did not choose Christ as their Lord & Savior, they REMAINED empty. Such a scenario is what Jesus refers to here. The demon that was cast out returns after some time. He finds the house clean and neat. But it's empty. So he tells seven of his friends, and they all rush in and take up residence. This person is worse off now than before. The reason is because he didn't fill the house with another resident. When we sacrifice our sinful DNA, it's like evicting a resident from a house. We become empty.

I have good news for you, though. God has provided another resident. Turn with me to Romans 8:1, 2. Paul refers to the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus". This is the fifth law that Paul has referred to in only six verses. First, he has talked about the law of God, which describes what God is like. Second, he has talked about the law of sin, which describes what sinners are like. Third, he has talked about the law of his mind, which is the new desires God gives a Christian. Fourth, he calls the "flesh" a law, which is our sinful desires. And now we have number five, the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus". Wow. What is this?

Turn with me to Luke 3:21, 22. At Christ's baptism the Spirit comes down and ANOINTS Christ for His ministry. Now turn with me to Luke 4:1. Christ has now been FILLED with the Spirit. The Spirit leads Christ into the wilderness, where He is tempted by the devil. Now let's read verses 14-21 of chapter 4. Jesus returns from the wilderness. The Spirit has become an observable power in Christ's life. People notice it, and the news spreads. Christ is asked to do the Scripture reading at church. He reads from Isaiah 61, which describes someone who has been anointed by the Spirit. This person preaches the gospel, heals, and sets people free. This person does all of this BY THE SPIRIT. When Jesus is finished, He sits down. And everybody is looking at Him, waiting for Him to make some comments on the Scripture reading. What does He say? "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." In other words, "I am this person. Everything I am doing is being done BY THE SPIRIT of the Lord."

Going back now to our fifth law, Paul calls the Spirit a law in Christ's life. Christ defeated evil everywhere He went. He spent His life working miracles to heal and to save. And yet, Christ said that He couldn't do anything on His own (John 5:30). What did He mean. He meant that everything He did was BY THE SPIRIT. Christ's house was not empty. The Spirit resided in Him.

What does this have to do with us? Turn with me to Romans 5:1, 5. The Spirit was given to who? Us. When we believe in Christ, God gives US the same Spirit that was at work in Christ.

Let's go back now to Romans 8. We'll read the first two verses again. Paul says the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" sets us free from the "law of sin and death". The Spirit was a law in Christ's life. By the Spirit's power Christ always did what was right. Sin was defeated again and again. This same Spirit has been given to us. And the reason is to set us free from the law of sin and death, our sinful DNA. It's also so He can live out in us the same perfect life He did in Christ. He empties our house. And HE becomes the new resident.

What is it like to have the Spirit as our new resident? Let's begin with some ground rules.

Let's read verse 5 of Romans 8. The focus here is on our minds. Our mind is the door into every area of our lives. Our sinful DNA leaves through this door. The Spirit comes in through this door. This is where we decide who is the resident in our house. It's also where we respond to temptation and conviction. Temptation is when Satan or our sinful DNA knocks on our door. They try to get back in through our minds. Conviction is when the Spirit tries to enter a certain part of our house, where He sees something that shouldn't be there. He does this in our mind. So, ground rule #1: The mind is the door to our house.

Now turn with me to Matthew 6:24. Slavery was practiced in Christ's day. And Christ says that a slave can't serve two masters. Masters demanded complete loyalty. In fact, no one can be completely loyal to two different people. In the same way, our "house" only allows one resident at a time. If we allow our sinful DNA to come back in, the Spirit will leave. If we call upon the Spirit to reside in our house, He will force our sinful DNA out. In any moment of our lives, one or the other is a resident. So, ground rule #2: The Spirit will not share our house.

Turn back to Romans 8 with me and we'll read verse 6. Peace characterizes the house where the Spirit resides. This is one of the primary ways to know if the Spirit resides in your house. This is not the world's peace. It is a peace that is not dependent on circumstances. It is a constant peace. There is peace because we are at last in harmony with heaven. We are no longer at odds with God. The One who resides in us is God's own Spirit. Also, there is peace because our new 100% good DNA that we received when we became Christians is in complete harmony with the Spirit. Our desires and the Spirit are one. I believe a third reason the Spirit brings peace is because our search for all that our hearts long for is over. We have finally found what we have been looking for, and could never find anywhere else. So, ground rule #3: The Spirit brings peace to our house.

For our final ground rule, turn with me to Ephesians 5:18. After someone drinks alcohol it reaches the brain and all the organs of your body within 90 seconds. When alcohol is in the blood it impairs your ability to think, your coordination, and even your ability to breathe. It affects your mood, sleep, body temperature, and appetite. Some people get sick, slur their words and lose memory. Others get aggressive. In short alcohol affects every part of your body. In the same way, the Spirit will affect every part of your life. When He comes in the house He goes into every room and looks in every corner. He gets rid of all your furnishings, and brings in new ones. Nothing is left the same. If we insist on keeping the Spirit out of certain areas of our lives, we will lose our peace. It will cause conflict. So, ground rule #4: The Spirit will transform every part of our house.

For a large part of my Christian life, it seemed like the door of my house was always open. One minute the Spirit was the resident. The next minute my sinful DNA was the resident. Back and forth, up and down, day in and day out. It wore me out. So how do we close the door? How do we keep our sinful DNA from coming in so often? How do we get to the point where it is the exception, not the norm, for us to open the door and allow our sinful DNA to come back in?

I would like to close with some practical ways we can to facilitate this process. How can we make the re-furnishing of our house as easy as possible?

I would like to share 4 ways that have helped me. First, I surrender to the Spirit. I have found that this is more important than any of the other four. If I don't do this, I fail every time. I ask the Spirit to do 2 things. One, I ask Him to help me distinguish what is sinful and what is good. Two, I ask Him to fill my mind. I say, "Lord, I give You control of my mind. Do in me what you did in Christ."

Second, I read good books. I try to fill my mind with the things of God. The best book in the world is the Bible. I like to read a translation that's easy to understand. There are a lot of good Christian authors today as well. I would be happy to mention some specific ones to you if you would like some recommendations.

Third, I look for good mentors. There's nothing like spending time with someone who shows me what a healthy Christian looks like. I have learned so much from other people, who have learned some things that I haven't in their Christian walk.

Last of all, I live to be a blessing. I was the most miserable person when I just thought of myself and my problems. When God showed me that my focus should be on helping other people instead of on my own problems, it was a relief. There are more needs out there than I will ever be able to fill. But I ask to show me what needs He wants ME to fill: raising my children to love God; doing repairs on people's houses; sending someone a card. What a blessing it is to live to bless others.

I will close with the lyrics to a song entitled, "The Blessing".

Let it be said of us
While we walked among the living
Let it be said of us
By the ones we leave behind
Let it be said of us
That we lived to be a blessing for life

Let it be said of us
That we gave to reach the dying
Let it be said of us
By the fruit we leave behind
Let it be said of us
That our legacy is blessing for life

This day
You set life, you set death right before us,
This day
Every blessing and curse is a choice now
And we will choose to be a blessing for life

Let it be said of us
That our hearts belonged to Jesus Let it be said of us
That we spoke the words of life
Let it be said of us
That our heritage is blessing for life

For your Kingdom, for our Children
For the sake of every nation