

OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

THE JONAH SYNDROME

WE POUT PATHETICALLY (JONAH 4)

APRIL 24-30, 2016



MAIN POINT

God will continue to transform our hearts to be like His, and we need to be ready to keep learning as the Spirit works on us.

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. Imagine you were traveling to someplace you had never been before. What would you want to know in order to help you navigate? What would you use to plot your course?
2. What are some tools or practices you think you need in order to grow as a Christian?

Leader: Jonah 4 clearly teaches that the work of God is never finished in our lives. Like Jonah, we all fall back into old patterns of sin, and we grumble about the place God has us today. However, we must remember that God will continue His work in transforming our hearts to be like His. This life is a journey, and the Holy Spirit is the primary tool we need to help us continue to learn and grow.

DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 8:5-11.

3. In Romans 8:5-8, Paul contrasts people who live according to the flesh and people who live according to the Spirit. What does Paul mean when he says “live according to the flesh” (v. 5)? What things stand out to you about this comparison?
4. What do these verses teach us about the person and work of the Holy Spirit?
5. Why do we need the Holy Spirit to transform our hearts to be like God’s? Why is working with the Spirit better than trying to manage our battles with sin and our personal growth on our own?

Leader: As we saw in Jonah 4, our sin—including our complaints and shortsightedness—is what so often holds us back from growing in Christlikeness. We often try and fight sin in our lives by our own effort, but such effort denies that sin is a spiritual battle. Rather than managing our behavior, we need to be changed from the inside out by the

Spirit of God. In Romans 8, Paul acknowledges there is a battle raging between our sin nature and the Spirit of God who has redeemed us. We need the Spirit of God on our side to win. The good news is, Jesus has already won the battle for us and has sent us the Spirit of God as our help. He brings the power and the transformation necessary for God to continue to work in our lives. When the Spirit of God takes up residence in our lives, we are able to set our minds on things of the Spirit. This way of thinking stands in contrast to the short-sightedness of the world.

6. Share about a specific time when you relied on the Holy Spirit to help you overcome a particular struggle or accept the place where God had you. What did you learn about God through that time of reliance and dependency? What did you learn about yourself?

7. Look again at Romans 8:9-11. What did Paul mean when he wrote that “the Spirit of God lives in you” (v. 9)? What are the implications of this truth in your life?

Leader: The word “lives” is used two times in this section (vv. 9, 11). When we become believers, the Holy Spirit of God lives in us (literally, “takes up residence”). We become temples of God (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19), and the indwelling presence of the Spirit is the evidence of God’s transforming work in us. The Spirit of God serves as our teacher, and the lesson that He teaches us all the time is that we are loved and cherished by God. He also serves as our guide, showing us how to live as those who have been changed by God. We are His sons and daughters, and we are being conformed into His image as we are being transformed by His Spirit.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 8:12-17.

8. What important distinctions does Paul make between those with and without Christ in these verses?

9. Read verse 17 again. What does it mean to be an heir of something? If we’re co-heirs with Christ, what do we inherit?

10. What does it mean to share in Jesus’ suffering? (See John 15:20-21.) Why is this type of suffering a necessary part of God’s transforming work in our lives? How have you experienced this truth?

Leader: When we become God’s children, we don’t become just children—members of the family—we become heirs. Being heirs means we inherit God’s blessings, including the Spirit’s power in us, freedom from sin, and eternal life with God. Being heirs also means we share in the suffering that comes with following Jesus. Life won’t be easy; we’re guaranteed struggles as children of God, many of which happen because of our loyalty to Him and His way of life. But we can bear the sufferings we face because of the hope we have in our future glory: eternity in God’s presence devoid of sorrow, sickness, death, and sin.

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- 11. Are you relying on your own effort to be changed into the image of God, or are you relying on the Spirit? What measures help us determine whether we are trusting the Spirit's work instead of our own?**

- 12. Like we saw from Jonah's example, we are tempted daily to fall back into the old patterns of sin. However, when we remember that we are children of God with the Spirit of God at work in our lives, it changes how we live each day. How can we, as a group, help each other be mindful of our relationship as children in the family of God?**

PRAYER

Praise God for sending the Spirit of Life into our hearts to cause us to cry, "Abba, Father!" Confess that there is much work for God to do in your heart and ask for the help of His Spirit. Thank Jesus for saving you and sending the Holy Spirit that you might be transformed.

MEMORIZE

¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. ¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. –Romans 8:10-11

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

ROMANS 8:5-17.

8:5. Paul often contrasted ideas in order to clarify the point he was making. Here he contrasted two opposing ways of living: flesh and Spirit. The lower nature (flesh) is in constant rebellion against the higher nature (Spirit). To live according to the flesh means to think about the things of the flesh. Thinking precedes action. A sinful mind-set inevitably leads to sinful living.

8:6. The contrast continues in this verse as Paul noted the difference between the consequences of living in these two ways. Death is the experience of someone who has the mind-set of the flesh. Notice Paul did not write death will come but rather death is the present experience of anyone apart from Christ. Separation from the source of life means death. The consequence for those of us who adopt the mind-set of the Spirit is completely different. Life is precisely what we expect and what we receive as a result of having the source of life within us. The second benefit for those of us guided by the Spirit is peace. This refers primarily to the state of our relationship with God.

8:7-8. Additionally, the mind-set of the flesh is hostile to God. It is not willing to submit to God but insists on its own way. The original sin of Adam set a pattern for all sin. It is a basic mistrust of God and a selfish desire to resist God's way. For this reason this mind-set leads to the death described in the previous verse. Our sin creates a chasm that remains regardless of how many times we may attempt self-renovation. This verse essentially repeats the substance of the previous verse but at the same time gives an important conclusion. To be in the flesh describes a life that is determined by the flesh in the same way the Spirit determines the lives of believers.

8:9. After describing the futility of life in the flesh, Paul returned to the theme of life in the Spirit and directly addressed his readers. He reminded them they were not in the flesh. We have been fundamentally changed and are different people. We are no longer in the flesh. This is a statement of fact, not an illustration or analogy. The reason we are in the Spirit is not because of anything we have done but because the Spirit of God lives in us. Notice Paul did not say the Spirit moves in slowly. Neither did he say the Spirit comes and goes. Once we have accepted Christ, God's Holy Spirit enters our lives and never leaves. The Spirit of Christ is another way of identifying the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. There is no interim period between confession and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

8:10. Christ indwells the believer. In this and the previous verse we have seen the phrases Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ, and Christ in you. This does not represent a confusion of phrases for Paul or an identification of the resurrected Christ and the Holy Spirit. The meaning is that the presence of Christ is mediated to us through the presence of the Holy Spirit. One consequence of Christ in you is that the body is dead because of sin. Sin ushers in the death of the body, that is, we die physically as a result of the corrupting presence of sin. Death is still a reality, but it is not the final disposition of a Christian. The presence of the Spirit (the Holy Spirit, not the spirit of a person) is the assurance that life is our final destination. Physical death is not the end of life for a Christian.

8:11. Once again, the word if is not intended to imply uncertainty or a condition. As is true of verse 10, this too introduces a statement of fact. The Spirit of Him is the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead, and this Spirit is in you. The action of the Spirit in the life of the Christian is essentially the same as it was in Jesus' tomb. The Spirit will bring your mortal bodies to life. Here is the promise of the resurrection. We are never without a body. We are never disembodied spirits.

8:12-13. Paul's concern here, however, was to stress that we must avoid behaviors that reflect "the mind-set of the flesh." Through the Holy Spirit's work in believers' lives, sin's power has been broken. The Spirit also leads us to live in a manner that honors God. Paul included another warning against living according to the flesh, probably because he knew the struggle would be so great. You are going to die is as stark a pronouncement as we find in Romans. The second person plural you makes this warning especially strong. The end of the life of a person who lived according to the flesh is death in every sense of the word, physical and spiritual. By the

Spirit, or with His power, we are able to put to death the deeds of the body. The tense of the verb for put to death is present, and in Greek the tense refers not only to the time of action but more importantly to the kind of action. In this case the present tense verb means we are to consistently engage in putting to death the deeds of the body.

8:14-15. The Spirit's leadership is continuous and on going. Those who are led in this way are God's sons. This family analogy is important. Just as children bear physical resemblance to their parents, they also will mimic much of their parent's behavior. Though Paul had used the analogy of slavery favorably to describe our obligation as Christians, here he portrayed it negatively. To have a spirit of slavery is to submit to the life of the flesh that Paul described earlier.

8:16-17. We have a new relationship with God through Christ. The Holy Spirit shares this reassurance together with our spirit. Adoption in first- century Rome ensured the adopted child had full inheritance rights. So it is with our adoption by God into His family. The term co-heirs with Christ emphasizes the reality of this great privilege. The description emphasizes our closeness to God and His genuine love for us as His children.