

The Battle for Our Mind and Heart

Rick Railston

Recorded on May 28, 2023

In our Father's plan of salvation, which we are so privileged to understand and to know, nothing happens without Christ our Passover. That starts everything. That is why the Passover is the first holy convocation. In Leviticus 23:4-5, it's the first holy convocation. Similarly, nothing can proceed after that without the Holy Spirit. James mentioned that eight days ago on the Sabbath; nothing can proceed without the Holy Spirit. That is essential to the plan of salvation.

The Holy Spirit was promised by Jesus on His last night on earth. Let's go to John 14:17-18 and then we'll read verse 23. Everything will be out of the King James unless otherwise noted. Christ is saying on His last night:

John 14:17 *Even the Spirit of truth; [The King James says whom, the correct translation would be which] whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him [Again, that's a concession to the trinity and should be translated it of course] not, neither knoweth him: but ye know [it] him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. (KJV)*

It was surrounding, and with the disciples so that they could understand some of the rudiments of what Christ was saying, but the Spirit was not *in* them at that moment in time. He's saying it shall be *in* you.

18) I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. (KJV)

The implication being through that very Spirit.

Continuing in verse 23) ...

23) Jesus answered and said unto him [Judas but not Judas Iscariot], If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we [the Father and the Son] will come unto him, and make our abode with him. (KJV)

Think about that for a minute. The Creator of the universe, the Father of everything and His only begotten Son, promise to come into physical, temporary, human beings and to *make their abode inside* us. What an honor, what a privilege that is. We sometimes take it for granted that this is a miracle. The most powerful Being of all will come and live inside a human being that sweats and has body odor and is imperfect in every way and will come and make Their home inside us? As we know, the Holy Spirit became available to the New Testament church on Pentecost. Let's go to Acts 2 just to set the stage for this day. We'll read the first three verses and the beginning of verse 4 out of the New Living Translation.

Acts 2:1 *On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. [Just as we are today.]*

2) *Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting.*

3) *Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them.*

4) *And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit. (NLT)*

Paul amplifies that—this Spirit coming to live inside us—in 1 Corinthians 6:19. Paul is writing approximately 25 years after this event happened in Acts 2.

1 Corinthians 6:19 *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, [the Father] and ye are not your own? (KJV)*

You don't belong to yourself anymore; you belong to the Father and His Son—not yourself. You have responsibilities beyond the self. The concept of the Father and His Son dwelling in humans is all part of His plan of salvation. That is not found in any other religion anywhere in the world. It is unique to the Bible. Think about this for a second:

The coming of the Holy Spirit inside us brings a gigantic problem for us.

Because there is a fundamental and a planned conflict within each of us once we receive the Holy Spirit. It's a fundamental conflict, it is a planned by God Almighty conflict.

So, the title of the sermon today is:

The Battle for Our Mind and Heart

That's the crux of this conflict as we'll flush out in just a minute. We're going to look at four points in this regard. To set the background, the first thing we need to do is establish the fact that:

1. Satan's spirit and human nature are both basically selfish.

Let's turn to Satan, because he was here long before humans were here. He was created before humans were created. Let's go to Isaiah 14:13-14; we're breaking into the story about Satan's rebellion. But we want to establish the fact that Satan's nature is totally selfish. Yehovah is speaking through Isaiah.

Isaiah 14:13 *You [referring to Satan] said in your heart, [notice the word "I" here] "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon.*

14) I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.
(NIV)

This is the crux of Satan's nature, to elevate himself, to put himself first, not the Father first. Then the parallel account in Ezekiel 28:17. This time Yehovah is speaking through the prophet Ezekiel. I'll read this out of the New Living Translation.

Ezekiel 28:17 *Your heart was filled with pride because of all your beauty. Your wisdom [what wisdom he had at one point] was corrupted by your love of splendor.* (NLT)

Satan wanted to be worshipped. He wanted to have the preeminence, he wanted to be number one. He wanted all of creation to look to him as the preeminent being and as we know he tried to make that happen and he utterly failed. If that is Satan's nature, now let's go to Adam and Eve and Genesis 3:6 and then the beginning of verse 7. Notice the parallel between Satan's nature and the nature of Adam and Eve. Granted he was there influencing them. This is out of the New Living Translation.

Genesis 3:6 *The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. [She wanted to take that] So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too.*
7) *At that moment their eyes were opened ...* (NLT)

They both ultimately wanted something—to take for the self. Satan was right there to provoke them because his nature is exactly like their nature. Let's look at a fundamental fact regarding human nature. This is fundamental to our understanding of ourselves, to the understanding of our Father and to the understanding the plan of salvation. Let's go to 1 John 3:8; it's amazing, I love John's writings because they are so simple yet he crams so much information in one verse.

1 John 3:8 *He that committeth sin is of the devil;* (KJV)

Very plain, very clear; you commit sin, that is from the devil. Humanly, Adam and Eve were the first, Satan was the first.

8 continued) ... for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. (KJV)

So, we have the devil with his selfish works and then we're told Jesus Christ came to destroy those works. We will see very clearly that the devil is selfish and Jesus Christ was just the opposite. Do we see a conflict coming between selfishness and selflessness? When Satan's influence comes into us, who also have the Spirit of God in us and we see a conflict, a real war in us. We see that both human nature and Satan's nature are selfish and we were the same before God called us, before we were converted, before we received the Holy Spirit inside us. Let's go to Ephesians 2:2, Paul

acknowledges this fact, that prior to conversion we were just out there with everybody else, with a hook in our nose by Satan, being dragged to and fro.

Ephesians 2:2 *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air [keep that in mind], the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: (KJV)*

A spiritual force is at work and that spirit is the prince of the power of the air. The Greek word for *power* is Strong's #1849, the Greek word *exousia* and Thayer's Greek Lexicon says it means "the power of authority" or "the power of influence". In this case, we're told that Satan has influence throughout the air. The NIV translates that as, *he is the ruler of the kingdom of the air*. So, we see that Satan is a powerful, very powerful spirit being, who can influence and provoke human beings to do ungodly things. To provoke our hearts, to provoke our minds, to do ungodly things. He can inject into our minds upsetting emotions, anger, bitterness, resentment, jealousy, irritation. How many times have you been just bopping along, world is fine, everything is going okay and within a matter of seconds, you realize, "I'm angry right now, irritated, ticked off right now. That's happened to all of us. It happens routinely and what we need to do—obviously we all do it—is pull the reins up and ask "What's going on? Where did that come from?" We know where it comes from.

Satan can also put in our minds, visual pictures. Pictures of ourselves saying and doing ungodly things. Telling somebody off, punching somebody's lights out. He can also inject nightmares, upsetting dreams, upsetting emotions in the middle of the night. Let me read from the Contemporary English Version of Ephesians 2:2.

Ephesians 2:2 *You followed the ways of this world and obeyed the devil. [Before we were called.]
2 continued) ... He rules the world and his spirit has power over everyone who doesn't obey God. (CEV)*

Think about that. He has power over everyone who does not obey God. So before being converted, we all walked in this manner. As Satan does today and as Adam and Eve did, we walk selfishly—to get for the self. We didn't think anything about it, that's just who we were, just our nature—selfishness. Our Father's Spirit is just the opposite. Selfishness over here, our Father's Spirit over here. Let's go to 1 John 4:8. John plainly hitting "the nail on the head" as far as human nature and our Father's nature.

1 John 4:8 *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. (KJV)*

Pretty fundamental statement. If you can't love, you don't know God.

9) In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. (KJV)

We might live every day through him, but we also might live eternally through Him.

10) Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us ... (KJV)

God knew us before we ever knew God existed. God knew us and loved us before we ever came to the point where we would say to Him, "I love You".

10 continued) ... and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

11) Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. (KJV)

Very logical and very true.

Continuing in Verse 16) ...

16) And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. (KJV)

Love is our Father's defining characteristic and that is just the opposite of Satan. Satan takes for the self. Our Father has outgoing love and concern for His children. Then, in Galatians 5:22, we see amplified, the very fruits of our Father's Spirit. I know this is a memory scripture but just for review.

Galatians 5:22 *But the fruit of the [Father's Spirit, shared by His Son] Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering [that has to involve other people], gentleness, goodness, faith,*

23) Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (KJV)

We see these fruits that we just read—we see on the other side, Satan's and Adam's and Eve's basic selfishness and our human nature—being basically selfish. Do we see between these two, if they live in one being, a potential conflict? A potential war? Because those who have the Holy Spirit in them also have human nature and by the closeness of those two inside us, you're being set up for a conflict, for a war. This is planned, this is part of God's plan for salvation and is something that all of us have to deal with and overcome if we're going to be in His Kingdom.

That leads to the second point.

2. Once we receive the Holy Spirit, a war is provoked within us.

This conflict, this war is part of our Father's plan. Jesus faced that very thing early in His ministry and how he handled it sets an example for all of us. Let's go to Luke 4 and read the first eight verses. This is Christ's confrontation with Satan.

Luke 4:1 *And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit [this is a concept, a message in itself, being led by the Spirit] into the wilderness,*

2) *Being forty days tempted of the devil. [tested by the devil, allowed by His Father] And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.*

3) [At His weakest point, Satan comes to him] *And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. [Satisfy your hunger.]*

4) *And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. (KJV)*

That didn't work—appealing to His physical needs and hunger.

5) *And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. (KJV)*

Can you imagine that, just flashing by? All the great kingdoms of the world.

6) *And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee [and he had the authority to do so], and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me [as prince of the power of the air, the prince of this earth]; and to whomsoever I will I give it. (KJV)*

He says, "I'll give you that, but one thing You must do."

7) *If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. (KJV)*

Isn't this the crux of the whole matter of our attaining salvation? Who are we going to worship? Who will it be?

8) *And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God [God Almighty, the Most High God, Yehovah, the living God], and him only shalt thou serve. (KJV)*

We see here that Jesus put His Father first. Obeyed the first commandment; only worship the Father, God Almighty. He rejected the temptations of Satan. That war wasn't a "won and done" on Christ's part. It wasn't that after He did that that Satan left Him alone for the rest of His physical life. That didn't happen. He was always there, pressing, pushing, trying to convert Christ to worshipping Him. Let's go to Mark 8 and see one example of that. We'll read verses 31-33. I used to wonder about this scripture, we'll see in a second.

Mark 8:31 *And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. (KJV)*

The disciples just couldn't handle this. He was telling them plainly, "Look this is going to end badly here, physically." He's going to be resurrected of course and that's the joy but He's going to rise again after being killed.

32) And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. (KJV)

"You can't talk this way; you shouldn't be saying these things." Then verse 33 out of the New Living Translation.

33) Jesus turned around and looked at his disciples, then reprimanded Peter. "Get away from me, Satan!" (NLT)

I always wondered about that. Is He calling Peter Satan here?

33 continued) ... he said. "You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's." (NLT)

He was reprimanding Peter but was speaking directly to Satan. "Get behind Me Satan." He's talking to Satan. Why? Because Satan was provoking Peter to rebuke Christ. Peter had a wrong spirit in him at that moment. He was yielding to Satan by jumping on Jesus Christ. He said, you're looking at it from a human point of view, you're not looking at it from My Father's point of view. So what Jesus did, He bypassed Peter and went right to the source. He said, "Satan, you get behind Me" because Satan is still there putting pressure, trying to get Christ to change and to turn.

About 2000 years ago Paul wrote about this same conflict that we have within each of us. Let's go to Romans 7, you know where we're going. We're going to read verses 14-25. I'll read this out of the New International Version. Paul is writing about this conflict between our Father's nature and Satan's nature and our human nature that is ongoing inside each one of us.

Romans 7:14 *We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.*

15) I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. (NIV)

Does it sound like there's a conflict going on inside Paul? There's a war going on inside Paul?

16) And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.

17) As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.

18) For I know that good itself does not dwell in me ... (NIV)

Think about that. What he's saying is, in his sinful nature, in my human nature, good does not dwell inside of me.

18 continued) ... that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, [that desire comes from the Holy Spirit] but I cannot carry it out. (NIV)

Because the flesh keeps warring against the Spirit.

19) For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. (NIV)

This is Paul the Apostle and look what he went through and think of the war going on inside him.

20) Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. [Through his human nature]

21) So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me [in his human nature].

22) For in my inner being I delight in God's law; (NIV)

In his "inner being" is where the Holy Spirit resides. In our heart—we call it the heart, not the physical heart.

23) but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. (NIV)

Let me read from the NLT for verses 22 and 23, it adds a little bit to it.

22) I love God's law with all my heart.

23) But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. (NLT)

Verse 24 back to the NIV.

24) What a wretched man I am! [This conflict, back and forth] Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?

25) Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature [his human nature] a slave to the law of sin. (NIV)

Then in the next chapter, Romans 8, he continues with this same theme. We'll read verses 5 through 11 out of the New King James.

Romans 8:5 *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.*

6) For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

7) *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.*

8) *So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (NKJV)*

Fundamental fact; *If we are walking carnally, we are not making God happy.*

9) *But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ [which is the same as the Spirit of God], he is not His.*

10) *And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. (NKJV)*

Verse 11 out of the King James.

11) *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, [Who raised up Jesus from the dead? God the Father.] he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. (KJV)*

You see this is the goal of winning the war. If we win the war, the Spirit that is in us, through that Spirit we will be raised to eternal life and achieve the goal. Paul mentions this conflict again in Galatians 5, we'll read verses 16 and 17 out of the NIV.

Galatians 5:16 *So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. [Notice the conflict.]*

17) *For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. (NIV)*

Meaning whatever your human nature wants; you can't do that. You have this conflict going on inside and we have to choose. We have to decide. Our Father designed this—this war and conflict—He designed that way so that once we have the Holy Spirit, we all have this conflict inside us, this war going on with us, every minute of every day. It's with us at all times. We have an adversary that never rests. Satan takes no days off. We won't turn there but 1 Peter 5:8, *our adversary the devil goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom—among God's people—he may devour*. Let's notice this fundamental fact about this conflict in us. Go to Acts 14:22, just one verse. This verse is referring to Paul and Barnabus and what they were doing—it's important what they were doing. Paul and Barnabus were confirming the lives of the disciples.

Acts 14:22 *... and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. (KJV)*

We—various speakers in Pacific—have talked a lot of about this over the last several years. It's not an easy slide into the Kingdom. There's no VIP treatment going into the Kingdom. We, *through much tribulation, enter the Kingdom*. The Greek word for

tribulation is Strong's #2347, the Greek word *thlipsis* and it means, (literally or figuratively) “pressure”. It also means “affliction, anguish, being burdened, being persecuted, or having trouble”. In the Worldwide days, those of us with that background, we were always taught that persecution was going to come from the outside. The beast or Germany or whatever it was, was going to come after us and lock us up and take us away, persecute us and throw us into jail and all of that. The persecution that would come upon us would come from the outside and that’s true. It can come from the outside. But we don’t often consider that the conflict—the pressure, the affliction—can come from inside of us. “Pressure, affliction, anguish, burden”—from the war that is constantly going on inside of us.

We could also say about this scripture, *through much pressure, affliction, anguish, and burden inside us, we enter into the Kingdom of God*. That would be equally true because of what we face every day of our lives. With that in mind let’s go to Luke 9:23. Jesus is speaking to His disciples.

Luke 9:23 *And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself ... (KJV)*

That means deny what you want, deny your selfishness.

23 continued) ... and take up his cross daily, and follow me. (KJV)

The Greek word for *cross* is Strong's #4716 and is the Greek word *stauros* and it means, (figuratively) “self-denial”. Take up your “self-denial”, deny yourself so you can follow Me. Not putting yourself first but putting My Father first. We have to deny our human nature and exercise the Holy Spirit in us. Every day our Father watches to see what we do. However, to win this war, I think we all know that we need help. We can’t do it on our own.

That leads us to the next point.

3. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of Power.

Sometimes we don’t often think about that, but it is a Spirit of power and it’s inside us and it’s available for our use. It’s the same power that created the universe, that created the human mind and body—that same power is inside us. Let’s take note of Luke 1:35, we won’t turn there, but remember the angel said to Mary, the mother of Jesus, “*The power of the Highest shall overshadow you*”. *The very power of the Highest shall overshadow you* and “*you’re going to have a child and He’s going to be called the Son of God*”. We see that the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of power. With that in mind let’s go to Acts 1:1-9. Luke is writing and is very detailed in his writing. If you study his writing it blows you away about the detail he gives, which tells you this can’t be some dreamt up thing centuries later, decades later—it was a firsthand account.

Acts 1:1 *The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,*

2) *Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:*

3) *To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: (KJV)*

Verse 4) is out of the New Living Translation.

4) *Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before.*

5) *John baptized with^[b] water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."* (NLT)

Verse 6) back to the King James.

6) *When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*

7) *And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. (NLT)*

Nobody can set dates. Why don't we learn that? It's in our Father's power.

8) *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.*

9) *And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. (NLT)*

We see here, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we have access to the very power of Almighty God. That helps us in this conflict. Let's go to Romans 15:13, establishing the fact that the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of power that helps us. This is out of the New King James.

Romans 15:13 *Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (NKJV)*

The reason we have this power is to give us the opportunity to do what, when you think about it? What's our mandate? It's to change. Change from what to what? Does it mean changing from Sunday to the Sabbath? Or changing from Easter to the Passover? Is that the change God wants us to totally focus on? Or is it something far greater than that. Yes, it is. The focus is:

He wants us to change to be a totally new person; a totally new human being than we were before. To be renewed from the old self to a new self, a new person.

Let's go to Titus 3:4-5, Paul is writing to Titus. This is out of the NIV.

Titus 3:4 *But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5) he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth [referring to baptism] and renewal by the Holy Spirit ... (NIV)*

Our purpose is to be renewed, allowing the Holy Spirit to renew us from an old self to a new self. The Greek word for *renewal* is Strong's #342 *anakainosis* and it means "a renovation". You've all heard where somebody buys a property in a residential neighborhood and they tear the house down and build a brand-new house. We call that a "tear down". There's a difference between a "tear down" and a "renovation". In a renovation, the basic structure stays mostly the same. The foundation and the walls, maybe add a room here or there but the structure remains the same. Inside and just about everything else, in a renovation, is all made new. In the *renovation* that our Father plans for us is our human body remains intact—we still have to deal with that—but He wants us to renew our mind and our heart. The renovation our Father is accomplishing in us is for us to change from the old self to the new self that He wants us to be. Let's go to Colossians 3:8-15 out of the New King James. Paul talks about this very thing. Talk about the old self for Paul—he was killing Christians, he was putting them in jail, breaking up families, causing people to be tortured and to die—that was his old self.

Colossians 3:8 *But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.*

9) *Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10) and have put on [through the Holy Spirit] the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,*

11) *where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.*

12) *Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, [what do we do as far as part of the new person?] put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;*

13) *bearing with one another, and forgiving one another [putting up with one another, forgiving one another], if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. (NKJV)*

That's one of the things that I've seen in 50 years as an Elder, one of the things least done, is brethren forgiving one another. Brethren just hold on to grudges. They can remember stuff that was done to them 20, 30, 40 years ago and they just can't let go of it. That's not what we're told here. You have to forgive.

14) *But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.*

15) And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. (NKJV)

Be thankful for our calling. We should thank God every day for our calling. He keeps that same theme up in Ephesians, the letter to the church at Ephesus, chapter 4:22-24. This is a theme of Paul where he talks about changing from the old man to the new man, the old person to the new person. I'll read this out of the New International Version.

Ephesians 4:22 *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, [from the beginning you have to put off the old person] which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;
23) to be made new in the attitude of your minds;
24) and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (NIV)*

We are to change from the old person to the new person and we're talking about the power of the Holy Spirit. We have a part to play in that. The Holy Spirit isn't just going to come and take us over. It doesn't work that way. Satan will come in and take us over, if we allow it, but the Holy Spirit won't. As we're going to see the Holy Spirit leads us. It's not a whip and chair pounding on us to do something, it leads us. Romans 8:14, Paul says this directly. This is what we have to keep in mind.

Romans 8:14 *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (KJV)*

The Spirit of God does not push and shove, it leads. So our part is to allow the Holy Spirit to lead. To allow the Holy Spirit to teach us, train us, what to speak, what to do and allow God's Spirit to exercise God's Spirit, to change our hearts and minds. We have to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit. We have to be sensitive to it. When that little voice—we've all had that, the still small voice so to speak—whispers that "Maybe you shouldn't be thinking this" or "You shouldn't have said that", or "Maybe you should reconsider the path you're going down". We've all been there. It's our job to let the Holy Spirit to lead us.

That leads us to the last point. It's kind of a scary possibility. Mark talked about this yesterday.

4. We are free to resist the Holy Spirit and we are free to reject the Holy Spirit.

We are free to do that. God Almighty gives us the choice. "Are you going to follow Me or follow Satan?" "Are you going to follow your human nature or are you follow My Son and the example He set?" We can resist the operation of the Holy Spirit. Notice Acts 7, just one verse, this is the account where Steven was talking to the High Priest and all the Jewish leaders and this sermon that he gave them led to his death, right on the spot. This is out of the NIV.

Acts 7:51 *"You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit!" (NIV)*

"You just turn your back on it." There were those there who knew Christ was the Son of God and they just turned their backs and wouldn't admit it. We see here that they resisted the Holy Spirit, but we can also outright reject the Holy Spirit. Let's go to 2 Timothy 3:1-2 and then verse 5 from The New Living Translation.

2 Timothy 3:1 *You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. (NLT)*

Obviously applies more to us than it did back then.

2) For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God [we see that in the media, we see it everywhere, people scoffing anybody who believes in God Almighty], disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. (NLT)

Continuing in verse 5) ...

5) They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that! (NLT)

That's a scary thought. Now let's go to Hebrews 6:4-6 from the NIV. Talking about those who have fallen away, turned their back on the church and God Almighty.

Hebrews 6:4 *It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5) who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age 6) and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. (NIV)*

They have fallen away because they have rejected the Holy Spirit. They don't want any part of the Holy Spirit. I think we've all known people who have left the church, they don't want any part of the church. They have gone back into Atheism or Agnosticism or a previous religion but they don't want any part of the truth about God Almighty. That's why Christ gave the following admonition. The Son of the one true God says this, let's go to Matthew 12:31-32.

Matthew 12:31 *And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.*

32) Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age [when he was talking] or in the age to come. (NIV)

These are very strong words about blasphemy—speaking against the Holy Spirit. You see, we would say, “I would never do that, I love God too much, I’m too close to God, I would never do that”. But Satan is very subtle and devious and he plans for the long term. We won’t turn there but in the parable of the sheepfold, remember the one who comes in and wants to take the sheep, first thing he does is steal them. Then he kills them, then he destroys them. That’s in John 10; Satan wants to steal us away from the truth, away from the church, away from a relationship with God. He wants to kill us physically if he can. It’s only through angelic protection that we’re spared that. Then he wants to destroy us; destroy us spiritually, so that we are not resurrected as spirit. Satan plays us like a frog in hot water. I think you’ve probably heard that story. When I was in graduate school studying psychology, this was something that was taught because that study hadn’t happened that long ago. It was by Dr. John Court who was a psychologist in the ’50’s. Let me read a paragraph from the study he did about a frog in hot water.

A frog was placed in cold water. Then the temperature was slowly and imperceptibly [*that’s the key*] imperceptibly increased. Eventually the temperature reached the boiling point yet the frog made no effort to escape. Because the change occurred so slowly, there was no recognition of danger and the frog died, making no attempt at self preservation.

Because the temperature was ramped up so slowly and that is exactly how Satan works with us. What he does is, over time, he increases our acceptance of sin. How much sin will we accept? How much sin will we allow ourselves to do? How much sin will we watch on television or read or look at on our computer? What he does is, over time he inches that up. Look at what he’s done in the world today. Stuff that we see on television today, if you had put that on television in the 1950’s there would have been riots in the street. Politicians would have been voted out of office. People would have boycotted television and books and radio programs, if they saw it then as it is today. You see what Satan does is, over time, over the decades, over the generations, over the years, he ramps up our acceptance of sin to what the average person today accepts as sin versus 50 years ago is totally different. They wouldn’t tolerate it back then. But today, it’s just part of life. What happens is, he increases our acceptance of sin a little bit at a time, over time, until we become a slave to that sin. He’s not interested in tomorrow; he wants “down the road” for us. He deals with us a day at a time, amps it up a little more and a little more and it’s up to us to put the brakes on it at some point saying, “I can’t do this, I can’t live this way”. Otherwise, we fall away; he’s got us and at some point, you get to a tipping point, just like that frog boiling to death in that water, it just sat there and endured it. We would do the same thing spiritually because we have accepted all of this evil, over time. So, the message is, we must be constantly aware of and on guard for sin creeping ever so slowly into our lives and we allow it over time. Otherwise, we’re going to become, if we don’t stop it, like the frog in the increasingly hot water, then it’s over with—we’re done.

Let's conclude now by noticing a fundamental fact. Let's go to Romans 14:17; something we can't forget. The Pharisees and the Sadducees first wrote their own law, much more stringent than our Father's law. It eventually superseded our Father's law and got people off track. They were "majoring in the minors".

Romans 14:17 *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking [that's not the crux], but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit ...*
(NIV)

In the Spirit which we commemorate the coming of this very day. It's a reminder to us, this very day, how blessed we are to have the Father and His Son, the Creators of all that has ever been, to come and make Their abode inside each of us. What honor is that? What a treasure that is. By designing this conflict that we've been talking about, Satan's nature, our human nature versus our Father's nature—this conflict, being designed into the plan of salvation—our Father wants to see, minute by minute and day by day, what we do with that conflict. That's our test; that's the judgment that we are under. Our Father wants to see what we will do with this conflict inside of us and which nature we will allow to win that conflict or that war.

This conflict is best illustrated by a story I heard years and years ago. It illustrates the conflict and the crux of the matter. The story is this:

One evening an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, to his grandson: "My son the battle is between two wolves inside each of us. One wolf is evil; it's anger, envy, jealousy, greed, arrogance, self-pity, resentment, lies, false pride and superiority. The other wolf is good and is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. So, the grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf wins?" The grandfather had a very simple answer, the old Cherokee simply replies, "The one that you feed".

Which one are you going to feed? That's the big question in our lives, talking about the subject today, is we have two natures inside of us. We have Satan's nature, which is human nature and is selfish. We have our Father's nature and His Son's nature which is loving, giving, kindness, serving, and helping others and the question is, on a day by day, minute by minute basis, which one do we feed? Both of those natures are inside each one of us. Which is going to win?

Here's our Father's simple truth—one last scripture—Galatians 6:8. This sums it up, this whole battle, this whole war inside us, it sums it up in one verse. Which one do we feed?

Galatians 6:8 *For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption;*
(KJV)

Going to the grave and our body will be corrupted and we'll never be resurrected to eternal life.

8 continued) ... but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. (KJV)

Our Father and His Son are watching to see which we feed. Which we will allow to win. Which wolf—the good or the bad, the dark or the light? Satan's nature or our Father's nature? So let's determine as we go forward with our lives—and we are all closer to the end than we were a day or two ago—let's determine that we will use, we will exercise and we will cherish the Holy Spirit which is inside of us. Let's remember this day because we are so thankful that this day. We commemorate the fact that the very Spirit of the Creator of all things, the Almighty, the Most High God and His only begotten Son—their Spirit comes to live in us.

We have a daily choice of which one we feed.