

*Living the Dream: Do You Want To Be Well?
Spiritual Wellness: The Result of Grasping the Gospel*

John 5:1-18

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Today is Pentecost, the day when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples in a powerful way and transformed their lives. Lives of timidity and denial became lives of powerful witness and martyrdom death. The disciples never were healthier than the day the Holy Spirit transformed their lives.

This morning we are talking about spiritual wellness as the third sermon in a four-part series on wellness. So far we have looked at:

Emotional Wellness: the result of transformed thinking and

Physical Wellness: the result of building a team of people to help you

On this Pentecost Sunday we want to pay attention to the way we can be spiritually well and that begins with a deep understanding of the Gospel.

In John 5:1-18 we read about the story of the man who had been lame for a long time – thirty-eight years. Jesus says to the man, “Do you want to be well?” The man says he has no one to help him. Last week we affirmed our need to have a team of people who can help us be physically well. But this morning there is only one thing we need to be spiritually well and that is the Word of God. Jesus said to the man, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.” Jesus did not touch the man. Jesus did not anoint the man. Jesus did not give him medicine. The power to heal resided in Jesus Word. So it was in creation and so it was for this lame man and so it is for us today. Being spiritually healthy, well, is the result of letting the Word of God heal us. The man acted on Jesus’ word, he picked up his mat and walked. I say to you this day, if you will claim God’s Word and act upon it, you will be spiritually well.

The good news of the Gospel is centered in what theologians call “positional truth.” Certain realities become yours when you are “positioned in Christ.” The Gospel is good news because in its simplest form the Gospel says:

1. At one point you were “positionally outside of Christ” – you were not “in Christ” and Christ was not “in you.”
2. When you became a Christian, you did so by “positioning yourself in Christ” and Christ was now “in you.”
3. When you are “in Christ” and Christ is “in you” you embody certain truths that transform your life.

Let’s look at some of the remarkable truths that are true of you and me if we are “positionally in Christ.”

First, the Scripture says we are NEW PEOPLE. We are not just altered people. We are NEW. This truth is best stated in II Corinthians 5:16,17

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come. All of this is from God.

This verse says that when Christ is in you, something is no longer present (the old you) and something completely new is present (the new you). What does that mean? Well, let's look at Scripture for the answer. When God embodies you – dwells within you (He isn't just up there in the heavens, He literally is dwelling within you through the presence of the Spirit):

1. You have a **new heart**. The heart is “the hub that governs all other parts of the self – including the mind, thoughts, feelings, the body and the soul.” Jim Robbins, [Recover Your Good Heart](#), Pg. 16

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” Ezekiel 36:26

2. You have a **new spirit**. There is something about your very personality that is radically new. The Holy Spirit's presence transforms your spirit. Ezekiel 36:26

3. Your **desires become new** – what mattered and was so important before becomes totally changed – new;

And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Ezekiel 36:27

What used to be drudgery and burdensome, trying to live a morally pure life, is now the desire of your heart – a work of the Spirit, not a work of the self. The self has now become one with the Holy God and what God desires we desire. Something brand new!!

4. Maybe the most astounding “newness” is our **righteousness**. No matter how hard we tried before being positioned “in Christ” to be righteous, holy, or blameless we couldn't. Only guilt and shame weighed us down. But now, we have an imputed righteousness (a righteousness given to us, not earned) that comes from Christ when we are positioned “in Christ.” Listen to these two most remarkable verses.

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. Romans 3:21,22

And just to be sure you get this point, let me also share with you this glorious verse that lets you know how God sees you at this very moment if you are positioned “in Christ.”

For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight.” Ephesians 1:4

Is this not remarkable? Because you are “in Him” God sees you through the lens of His Son. In other words, God sees the very righteousness of His Son Jesus Christ when He gazes upon you. He does not see your old self, He sees your new self and that self is holy, righteous and blameless because the very righteousness of Jesus is what God sees. Incredible!!

So what does this mean? It means that:

5. We have a **new identity**, a new self-image. The Apostle John shares a remarkable statement of Jesus.

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."
John 15:15

We are no longer servants of the God we love, but we are His friends and because we are friends, God shares his innermost thoughts and plans with us. It is like we just heard that we have been made a partner in a prestigious law firm and we now will sit at the conference table with the partners and know all the inner workings of the firm. We are now privileged to know all that the Father has made known to the Son about life from a kingdom perspective. What a privileged identity we have, a friend of God.

6. Maybe the most meaningful aspect of our new being is a new freedom that we now have. There is nothing worse than suffering imprisonment with no remaining freedoms. Being imprisoned in the old self with the old nature and the old results (death and separation from God because of our sin) is hell. But now we have a new freedom simply because we are positioned "in Christ."

But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code. Romans 7:6

The law binds us, keeps us tied to the emotional pit of guilt and shame, but no longer. When Jesus called Lazarus to come forth from the tomb where he had been dead for three days, Lazarus came forth. But even though he was now alive again, a miracle in itself, Jesus told those who were with him to "Take off the grave clothes and let him go." When we really understand the power of the Gospel, it isn't only about the eternal life we will have but it is about being untied from the grave cloths we have been bound by – namely, the perfection of law keeping. We have a new desire to follow the law, and a new power to obey it (the Holy Spirit) but we are now righteous in God's sight and we never have to go back into discouragement and depression about our sins. As Romans says, we now have a new way of the Spirit and not the old way of the written code. That is worthy of an "Amen and Amen."

And so, we have

7. A NEW LIFE. Not a refurbished one. Not a modified one. But a NEW ONE. So says Paul.

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. Ephesians 2:1,4

When I was in fifth grade my parents moved from Detroit, Michigan to Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. At that age I lived for baseball. In Detroit I never participated in an organized league but I played baseball every waking moment I had in a vacant lot at the end of our street. But in Bloomfield Hills there were organized Little League communities and the closest one for me was in Franklin, Michigan. My brother Jim and I tried out for the league and I received a call from one of the coaches saying I had been selected to play on the Franklin Orioles and I needed to show up to the field on a Saturday morning to get my uniform. My uniform? I didn't know I would actually be given a uniform. That Friday night I didn't sleep a wink. I peddled my bike down to the ball field early Saturday morning and was measured for my uniform (as if there was any choice – small). After receiving my shirt, pants, socks and hat, I went into a public restroom at the ball field and changed into my uniform and rode home. I wore that uniform all day and went to bed in it that night. I wanted to wear it

to church the next morning but my parents said “no.” (Now you know why I turned out the way I did – such abusive parents! ☺) When I put on that uniform I was not Hoyt. I was a Franklin Little League Oriole. I had a new identity. I had new desires. I was part of a team, not just a person. I had a coach and whatever he said I did. My joy came not from being Hoyt. My joy came from being a Franklin Little League Oriole and that was my most precious identity. When I wore the uniform I was emotionally, physically, spiritually and relationally in my glory – I was a new creation. Hard to believe? You would have had to know me then to fully understand the transformation that occurred in me when I wore the uniform but it was real.

And that leads me to something else that is new when we are positioned “in Christ” – we are part of a NEW COVENANT. The new covenant is in Christ’s blood – His work, not ours.

He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant – not of the letter (of the law) but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. II Corinthians 3:6

We no longer have to live mortally wounded. We have life and we have it abundantly. And when we are positionally “in Christ” and He is positionally “in us” He brings to our inner life health and wholeness expressed as the “fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” Galatians 5:20.

This entire series is about wellness and those who are truly well are those who embody the fruit of the Spirit. Trying to find lasting health by controlling the circumstances of our lives only produces frustration. But placing ourselves “into Christ” and having Christ “in us” brings all the ingredients of wellness to us through the grace of the Spirit of God: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

So, where is Christ in relationship to you? Are you “positionally in Christ” and He is positionally “in you”? Are you still trying to reform the old self so you can be acceptable to God? Are you still suffering under the burden of the Old Covenant? Then why not be certain today that you are positionally where life occurs – new life – a brand new life. Why not become a brand new you? How? Simply pray and ask Christ to come “into you” so you can be “in Him” and He will enter with great joy. Spiritual wellness is never achieved apart from being a receiver of God’s good gifts. Welcome Him now. Amen.