

## Fit For The Kingdom 6-26-16

We thank You, Lord Jesus, for paying the price in full for our salvation! We are washed clean in You. You have made us fit for the Kingdom! You've supplied our every need! We are baptized into Your Kingdom; ready to serve You & You alone. Come by Your Spirit, we pray. Enlighten, strengthen, Encourage! A.

Our neighbors in Minneapolis had a lot going on in their home. We don't know the extent of it – we do know there was some drug dealing & God only knows what else. The two kids suffered for it, but they were both great kids. One day Matthew, about 8, happened to have a new shirt, new shorts, & new white tennis shoes. When I saw him after school, I said, “Hey Matt! I see you kept your tennis shoes looking like new!” He said, “Well, that's because I've been spitting on my finger & wiping them off all day!” We do that, don't we, when we have something new – don't you like to keep it clean? Keep it looking new? And when we have to do a dirty job, we don't put on best clothes. If we have our good clothes on, we change.

Ok, we understand keeping clothes clean in the natural realm. What does this have to do w/the spiritual realm? Spiritually speaking, you are dressed in new clothes. You are clothed in a white robe. You've been washed in the waters of baptism; you are washed in the blood of Jesus the sacrificial Lamb. The point is you are clean! And you didn't do it yourself! However, many Christians do think it's their job to clean themselves up. If they want to get their lives in order because they're sick of the life they're living, they think that in order to approach the throne of God, they have to

quit certain behaviors – no more smoking, drinking, inappropriate sex, etc. They better quit swearing & talk nice. They need to try everything to be good. They concentrate on trying to look like they’ve got all their ducks in a row. But get this: **The truth is you are as clean as Jesus in God’s eyes** RIGHT NOW. You’re forgiven. You already do NOT want to follow after the lusts of the flesh. The Holy Spirit of the Living God is alive & well & is working in you to cause you to **want** to please the Lord, & then helping you to **do** the things you are led to do. In Jesus, you are clean! New! And you don’t want to soil your robe of righteousness!

Realistically, we often see ourselves as failures because we sin. There’s a battle raging between the flesh & the Spirit. What is flesh? When we speak of *flesh*, we are not talking about just the physical body. We’re talking about that part of us that’s never satisfied. It lusts after more. It is self-serving. It’s not free to serve others. The flesh lives in emptiness – grasping after a thrill, something to bide the time, a diversion that titillates, interrupts the boredom. It tells us “Just this once & then I’ll be satisfied.” It’s a lie. People who are ensnared by the flesh are truly in bondage. They believe they are free to do whatever they want, but pursuing the works of the flesh – sexual sin, idolatry, hatred, jealousy, envy, drunkenness, murder, selfish ambition – never bring satisfaction, joy, peace, etc. – only momentary pleasure. There’s a sign in a store in HC that says, “Let the party begin so that I can do all the things I’ll be embarrassed about later.” Wrap your mind around that one! Let’s do it so I can be embarrassed later??

The flesh is hostile to God. A person following after the flesh, wants to do it themselves, accomplish successful living on their own – then they can take the credit. They set up their own legalistic code. But there is no satisfaction! With all the emptiness, dissatisfaction, lack of joy, one would think the person chasing after fleshly desires, would run to God as fast as they could run. Sadly, pride won't let them. Or, they believe their cheap thrills are as good as it gets. The flesh hates, loathes, & detests the idea of living by faith – living trusting God, resting in the promises of God.

As people of God, we are told to walk in the Spirit. Paul says if we walk in the Spirit, there's no way we will try to satisfy the lust of the flesh. In the Greek it is a **STRONG NEGATIVE – NO WAY** will we fulfill the lust of the flesh if we walk according to the Spirit! Paul says that's true freedom - not freedom **FOR** self-indulgence; it's freedom **FROM** obeying the passions of the flesh! Ahh, but the flesh entices – one little thought, one little slip,... do you really want to get your robe dirty for such momentary pleasure? Yes, sometimes we do, but then we remember who we are! We are the people of God – washed in the blood of the Lamb! We are clean – as clean as Jesus b/4 God.

So how does one walk in the Spirit? It isn't much different from walking by faith. We rest in God. We rest in the assurance that God's got it – whatever the struggle, the problem, the situation, God's got it! If we see the Spirit as similar to the locomotive – the engine that pulls the train. We're like a car on the train. We trust that the

locomotive will get us to where we're supposed to go. It's like the Lord is the vine; we are the branches. We abide; we live in Him. As we do, the life of the vine flows into us. When we try to do this on our own, it fails. John Piper puts it this way, "People who try to love without relying on God's Spirit always wind up trying to fill their own emptiness rather than sharing their fullness. And so love ceases to be love." We get our life from God.

The promises of God are our life-blood. The more we know the promises, the more peace we'll experience. Jesus has promised to be w/us – never leave us. Therefore, it's a settled issue – Jesus is here – in our midst. Jesus touch each one. Heal the hurting, comfort the grieving." Take God's promises. Tape them on the walls if you need to, the bathroom mirror, the kitchen sink. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous – AND we're righteous because of Jesus – but the Lord delivers him out of them ALL! How many times have you cried out to God w/that one? And He does deliver us out of all trouble! One time I was driving a little Ford Ranger south on 35W just beyond the point where 94 joins it. It had snowed. I hadn't taken the snow off the roof. Suddenly the windshield was covered with snow over an inch thick – it slid down & blinded me for several seconds because it was too much for the windshield wipers. All I know is that I started singing, "Be Thou my vision, oh, Lord of my life..." Only thing is, that was a point in my life when I didn't even know that hymn. I have no idea how the Lord spared me from other cars until the windshield cleared!

We are not under the law. The more we walk in the Spirit, the more we meditate on His Word, the more the fruit of the Spirit grows in us. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control become a part of us. We become able to love others from the heart – not in empty words, but in deep caring. Then we too fulfill the law as we love our neighbor as ourselves. The Spirit silences the voices of guilt and greed and lust that keep us from truly believing that we are clean b/4 God the Father!

Jesus, at the Last Supper, set the example. He washed the disciples feet. Jesus did the job reserved for the lowest slave. Jesus did this out of His own fullness, divine love. Jesus came to serve. That's our role too! It's the point! It's not all about us! I! Me! My needs! Yes, we all have needs. We get them satisfied in Jesus – and sometimes that does involve others blessing us. But we aren't dependent on others. We don't call the shots. We don't tell the Lord how our needs are to be met. We rest in Him. We trust. We walk by faith & see the Lord work in our behalf!

You have new, clean clothes. You already do not want to get them dirty. Therefore, repent quickly of your sin. Receive forgiveness. Live freely in the knowledge that you are as clean as Jesus b/4 God because Jesus has taken your sin, washed you clean.