

THE SENSE OF LIFE

Scripture Reading: Rom. 8:6, 2, 11; Eph. 4:18-19; Heb. 8:10; 1 John 2:27; John 15:4-5; Phil. 2:13

OUTLINE

- I. The meaning of the sense of life:
 - A. The feeling of death—weakness, emptiness, uneasiness, restlessness, depression, dryness, darkness, pain, etc.—on the negative side—Rom. 8:6a.
 - B. The feeling of life and peace—strength, satisfaction, peace, rest, release, liveliness, watering, brightness, comfort, etc.—on the positive side—Rom. 8:6b.
 - C. Related to the consciousness of the conscience—Eph. 4:19.
- II. The source of the sense of life:
 - A. The divine life with the richest, strongest, and keenest feeling—Eph. 4:18.
 - B. The law of life—the natural ability and function of life—Rom. 8:2; Heb. 8:10.
 - C. The Holy Spirit—the anointing ointment—Rom. 8:11; 1 John 2:27.
 - D. Christ abiding in us—John 15:4-5.
 - E. God operating in us—Phil. 2:13.
- III. The function of the sense of life:
 - A. Making us know whether we are living in the natural life or in the divine life.
 - B. Making us know whether we are living in the flesh or in the spirit.

Now that we have seen something concerning the fellowship of life, we want to go on to see the sense of life. We saw in the previous message that the fellowship of life is realized by the sense of life and that the sense of life preserves the fellowship of life.

Romans 8:6 says that the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace. Verse 2 of Romans 8 speaks of the law of the Spirit of life and verse 11 of the Spirit who dwells in us. Then we have to read Ephesians 4:18-19. In verse 18 there is the life of God. The unbelievers are alienated from the life of God. Then verse 19 says that they are "past feeling." Hebrews 8:10 says that in the new testament God writes His laws within the believers. Then 1 John 2:27 speaks concerning the anointing that teaches the believers concerning all things. John 15:4-5 speaks of our mutual abiding with the Lord, and Philippians 2:13 speaks of God operating within us both the willing and the working for His good pleasure. These are some of the most precious verses in the New Testament, and they all have something to do with the sense of life. Of course, in the whole New Testament you cannot find a verse that directly uses the term the sense of life. But the sense of life is thoroughly implied and referred to in all the above verses.

IV. I. THE MEANING OF THE SENSE OF LIFE

First, we need to see the meaning, the definition, of the sense of life.

V. A. The Feeling of Death— Weakness, Emptiness, Uneasiness, Restlessness, Depression, Dryness, Darkness, Pain, Etc. — on the Negative Side

The sense of life on the negative side is the feeling of death, a kind of negative feeling. This is definitely revealed in Romans 8:6. We have to realize Romans 8:6 is altogether a verse of sensation because it says the mind set on the flesh is death. This is not only a fact, but it is also a matter of feeling, a matter

of consciousness. When you set your mind on the flesh, you have the sense of death. You feel that death is there.

The feeling of death is the inner feeling of weakness, emptiness, uneasiness, restlessness, depression, dryness, darkness, pain, etc.—on the negative side (Rom. 8:6a). When you sense that you are weak, empty, uneasy, restless, depressed, dried up, darkened, and in pain within, this indicates that death is there. When death is here, this means that you have set your mind on the flesh. To set the mind on the flesh simply means to live in the flesh. The mind is the key of our daily walk. The key opens the gate for us to walk on the way. To set the mind on the flesh simply means to open the gate of the flesh and to walk the fleshly way. Thus, when you sense death is here, you have to realize that you are living, walking, in the flesh. This is the negative function of the sense of life.

**B. The Feeling of Life and Peace—
Strength, Satisfaction, Peace, Rest, Release, Liveliness, Watering, Brightness, Comfort,
Etc.—
on the Positive Side**

On the positive side the sense of life functions to give us a consciousness of the following positive things—strength, satisfaction, peace, rest, release, liveliness, watering, brightness, comfort, etc. (Rom. 8:6b). Instead of being weak, we are strong. Instead of being empty, we are satisfied. Instead of uneasiness and restlessness, we have peace and rest. Instead of depression, we have release and liveliness. Liveliness is a kind of condition of livingness. We have a sense of watering versus dryness, brightness versus darkness, and comfort versus pain. All these are the positive feelings we have from the function of the sense of life. When we have these kinds of feelings, we have to realize that this is the working of the sense of life.

Thus, in Romans 8:6 the main thing that is implied is the sense of life. To set the mind on the spirit is life and peace. This is altogether a matter of sensation and consciousness. This consciousness is the sense of life. It functions not only to guide us but also to govern us, to control us, and to direct us. The feeling of death and the feeling of life and peace are the two aspects of the meaning of the sense of life.

C. Related to the Consciousness of the Conscience

On both the negative side and the positive side, the sense of life is always related to the consciousness of the conscience. Ephesians 4:19 says that the unbelievers are "past feeling." "Feeling" here refers mainly to the consciousness of one's conscience. The unbelievers in general do not care for the feeling of their conscience. The most careless people concerning their inner feeling are the most sinful people. The unbelievers who endeavor to be good persons surely would take care of their inner feeling. Just to be governed by the law, by the police, is not up to the moral standard. Even with the unbelievers, the moral standard must be according to the inner feeling of their conscience. Of course, the sense of life, for a believer, is not simply a matter of the conscience, but it is related to the consciousness of the conscience according to the sense of life, the life of God.

II. THE SOURCE OF THE SENSE OF LIFE

A. The Divine Life with the Richest, Strongest, and Keenest Feeling

Any kind of life has its feeling. If something does not have any feeling, that means it has no life. It is a dead thing. A stone does not have any feeling, but anything that has life has feeling. The higher the life is, the stronger the feeling is. The divine life is the strongest and highest life so it has the richest,

strongest, and keenest feeling (Eph. 4:18). The divine life is the first item of the source of the sense of life. According to Ephesians 4:18-19, the unbelievers are past feeling because they are alienated from the life of God. If we are one with the life of God, we will have the richest, strongest, and keenest feeling.

B. The Law of Life— the Natural Ability and Function of Life

The law of life is the natural ability and function of life (Rom. 8:2; Heb. 8:10) and is another item of the source of life. Because this life-law functions within us, it surely gives us a certain kind of sensation, so it is an aspect of the source of life. Romans 8:2 speaks of the law of the Spirit of life, and Hebrews 8:10 says that this law is inscribed on our hearts.

C. The Holy Spirit—the Anointing Ointment

The Holy Spirit—the anointing ointment—is also an aspect of the source of the sense of life (Rom. 8:11; 1 John 2:27). Exodus 30 speaks of the anointing ointment, the compound ointment for the tabernacle and the priesthood. In ancient times, the tabernacle with all its utensils and the priests were anointed with the ointment. Today the Holy Spirit is the ointment to the whole church with all the saints. The Spirit anoints us continuously, and His anointing is a kind of inner working and moving which gives us the sense of life. This anointing Spirit is also the source of the sense of life.

D. Christ Abiding in Us

Christ abiding in us is another aspect of the source of the sense of life (John 15:4-5). Actually, His abiding in us is the function of life and gives us the sense of life.

E. God Operating in Us

God is operating in us all the time (Phil. 2:13). His inner operation gives us the sense of life. Thus, it is a source of the sense of life.

Regardless of how moral the unbelievers are, they have only the human conscience to go by, and this has been greatly damaged by the fall of man. Even today with many unbelievers, their conscience has been damaged and even seared by their daily sinfulness. Their damaged conscience does not work very well. Even if the unbelievers' conscience did work well, it is the only thing that they have.

The teaching of Confucius is altogether centered on the developing of the conscience, which is referred to by him as the "bright virtue." His ethical teachings and the positive teachings of the good philosophers are focused on the development of the human conscience. The development of the goodness within a person is the development of his conscience, which was created by God.

The unbelievers have the human conscience, but we believers have not only a created conscience but also a renewed conscience. Our conscience, as a part of our spirit (Rom. 9:1; cf. 8:16), has been renewed through the regeneration of our spirit. In addition to this renewed conscience we have these five great things: the divine life, the law of the divine life, the Holy Spirit, Christ, and God. Thus, there is no comparison between the created conscience of the unbelievers and the renewed conscience of the believers who are indwelt by the Triune God as the divine life.

We Christians should be persons full of feeling all the time. We should not be dull or numb. We must be very sensitive, full of sensations because we are living and rich in life. This is because we have a

regenerated spirit with our conscience renewed. We also have the divine life, the law of this divine life, the Holy Spirit, Christ, and God. Therefore the sense of life is high, rich, strong, and keen within us.

III. THE FUNCTION OF THE SENSE OF LIFE

Now we want to see the function of the sense of life.

A. Making Us Know Whether We Are Living in the Natural Life or in the Divine Life

If we are living in the natural life, the sense is of death and is entirely on the negative side. Then we have the feeling of death with all of its negative points. If we are living in the divine life, the sense is of life and is entirely on the positive side. Then we have the feeling of life and peace with all of its positive points. The sense of life makes us know whether we are living in the natural life or in the divine life. The sense of life guides us, governs us, controls us, and directs us. This truth has been altogether lost in today's Christianity. Most of the teachings of today's Christianity are focused on morality and good behavior. They do not care for this inner sense of life functioning to make us know whether we are living in the natural life or in the divine life. Since we are seeking after Christ as our life, we must take care of this sense of life. If we do not have the positive sensations of strength, satisfaction, peace, rest, release, liveliness, watering, brightness, comfort, etc., we must realize that we are not living in the divine life; it must be that we are living in the natural life.

B. Making Us Know Whether We Are Living in the Flesh or in the Spirit

The function of the sense of life is also to make us know whether we are living in the natural life or in the divine life. To live in the natural life is one thing, and to live in the flesh is another thing. You may consider these are one, but still there is a little difference. The flesh is always bad. There is no good flesh. But the natural life sometimes may be good. The natural life is versus the divine life, and the flesh is versus the spirit.

Therefore, there are two aspects concerning the function of the sense of life. The first aspect is to let you know whether you are living in the divine life, and the second aspect is to let you know whether you are living in your spirit. Negatively speaking, it makes you know whether you are living in the natural life, as a natural person, and also whether you are living in the flesh. In our experience we always can differentiate these two things. Many times we have the sense that we are living, walking, and acting in the flesh. Sometimes we are not that fleshly, but still we have the sense that we are walking in our natural life, in our natural man, not in the divine life.

Before we speak this lesson to the saints, we need much prayer to get into these points. This lesson should not be a mere doctrine of knowledge according to the letter. It must be something of life from our experience. We need much prayer to pray ourselves into the sense of life. Then we can give a word not merely in teaching but practically in fellowship. Our message will be a kind of fellowship, telling people how we have experienced these things, how the sense of life is so real and practical to us, and how we are under this kind of controlling, guiding, directing element within us day by day.

Reference: Living Stream Ministry Publications