

## SPIRIT DRIVEN LIVES

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### Introduction

One of the hot books on the market has been The Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren. I hear Paul in his letter to the Romans today writing about the Spirit Driven Life. I suppose one could draw a conclusion from those titles that the Purpose Driven Life appears to be more my decision and the Spirit Driven Life more God's decision, which is some of my Lutheran theology showing this morning. I want to consider Paul's Spirit Driven Lives with you this morning.

Brenda was a young woman who was invited to go rock climbing. Although she was scared to death, she went with her group to a tremendous granite cliff. In spite of her fear, she put on the gear, took hold of the rope, and started up the face of that rock. Well, she got to a ledge where she could take a breather. As she was hanging on there, the safety rope snapped against Brenda's eye and knocked out her contact lens.

Here she is on a rock ledge, with hundreds of feet below her and hundreds of feet above her. Of course, she looked and looked, hoping it had landed on the ledge, but it just wasn't there. Far from home, her sight now blurry, she was desperate and began to get upset, so she prayed to the Lord to help her find it.

When she got to the top, a friend examined her eye and her clothing for the lens, but there was no contact lens to be found. She sat down, despondent, with the rest of the party, waiting for the others to make it up the face of the cliff.

She looked out across range after range of mountains, thinking of that Bible verse that says, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth." She thought, "Lord, you can see all these mountains. You know every stone and leaf, and you know exactly where my contact lens is. Please help me." Finally, the group walked down the trail to the bottom.

At the bottom there was a new party of climbers just starting up the face of the cliff. One of them shouted out, "Hey, you guys! Anybody lose a contact lens?"

Well, that would be startling enough, but you know why the climber saw it? An ant was moving slowly across the face of the rock, carrying it!

Brenda's father is a cartoonist, and when she told her Dad about the incredible story of the ant, the prayer, and the contact lens, he drew a picture of an ant lugging that contact lens with the words, "Lord, I don't know why you want me to carry this thing! I can't eat it, and it's awfully heavy. But if this is what you want me to do I'll carry it for you." I love that story. It illustrates for me something of what it means to live a Spirit-driven life. "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption."

So what does this Spirit driven life look like? I want to speak about it in three ways: first, our weakness is our strength; secondly, we'll lead unpredictable lives; and thirdly, we will be taken in directions we do not wish to go.

### I Our weakness is our strength

Spiritual gifts inventories are the rage in the church today. Everyone needs to know their spiritual strengths. God gave us strengths for a reason. That's how we are going to make our biggest contributions in life naturally. But the Holy

Spirit operates in a whole different frame of reference. Our biggest contributions in life are not going to come out of our strengths, but our weaknesses! How does scripture put it? God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. We will bless others out of our strengths naturally, but our biggest blessings on others will be made through our weaknesses supernaturally. It's the power of the Spirit that makes these biggest blessings happen. It is not our doing.

Someone has said: "God doesn't ask us if we are able, God asks if we're available." Or as someone else has put it: "God doesn't call the equipped, God equips the called." Or in another form: "God doesn't call the qualified; God qualifies the called."

In scripture there is one consistency that's so obvious it's blinded us: the Spirit chooses people to do great things that they're not qualified or gifted to do. No wonder the first reaction of those being summoned to lead is to turn away from the job, and in some cases, even to turn the job down. It's almost as if...if you feel qualified to do the job, you don't get the job. Talk about turning things upside down.

Take the call of Moses. Yahweh says to Moses: "Moses, I want you!"

"I'm here, Lord. What do you want me for?"

"I want you to stand up to the greatest political and military force in the world, and to tell him in no uncertain terms, LET MY PEOPLE GO!"

How did Moses respond? Did he say, "Oh, thank you Lord. I've been waiting for this moment my entire life. This is precisely where I scored highest on my spiritual gifts inventory. Thank you so much."

No, that's not how it went. Rather, Moses says, "Who am I...? Are you kidding? You've got the wrong man. You're asking me to do the precise thing I'm NOT gifted in. In fact, I've got a speech impediment that prevents me from saying anything clearly..."

"NO WAY, Yahweh!"

And Yahweh says, "I know there isn't a way, Moses. There's no way you can do this on your own strength. But my promise to you is this: I WILL MAKE A WAY."

If we are living a Spirit driven life, we will find ourselves in situations where our only recourse isn't to trust in our own strength, but to trust in the promises of God and the power of the Holy Spirit.

## **II We'll lead unpredictable lives**

In John 3:8 we read that the wind blows where it wills and you can't tell from where it comes and where it goes. Since the word for spirit is *pneuma*, which is translated wind, I have always thought this verse was about the Spirit. But it's not. Let's look at it again, carefully. "The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. (Take note of the last sentence now). So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." This verse is about those who lead Spirit-driven lives. If our life is being driven by the Spirit, there's one thing that can be said about us: we're unpredictable. We can't even predict what we're going to do next. We're like the wind, you hear the sound of it, but you don't know where it comes from or where it goes.

Why is that? It's because we are windblown. It's because our life is under the control of the Spirit. How do we respond if someone asks; "where do you see yourself five years from now?" If we can tell them where we'll be or think we'll be five years from now, then who is in control of our life? There is only one answer to that question about where we'll be five or ten years from now: "I have no idea. I trust and obey the Spirit."

There's no way the disciples could have known what was in store for them on that first Pentecost when this sound of a violent wind disrupted their quiet, and then to have divided tongues of fire resting on each of them. Spirit-driven lives are unpredictable.

### **III We will be taken in directions we do not wish to go**

Perhaps one of the greatest tests of whether we are living in the stream of the Spirit is whether we are going in directions we want to go. Can you give evidence of certain points in your life that you have veered off the favorable path for the narrow paths that take you in uncertain places? Think right now: when was the last time you were taken in a direction you did not wish to go. Maybe it was down the path of grief and despair in the untimely loss of a loved one or a job, or the push to visit someone you really don't want to see.

You see, Spirit-driven people will end up being taken in directions they didn't wish to go. That was Jesus' word to Peter after the resurrection, when he confronted Peter about whether Peter loved him or not. He told Peter "to follow" and just before that he said to him he would be taken where he did not wish to go.

Is that a scary thought, or is it part of the adventure of being Spirit-driven?

A clergyman was having a cup of tea with Mother Teresa, and referring to her famous ministry he asked, "What is your greatest problem, Mother?" She quickly replied, "Professionalism." He was shocked by her answer, and sensing that, she spelled it out.

"I have five sisters getting M.D. degrees and a far greater number getting R.N., L.P.N. and M.S.W degrees. But a funny thing happens. They come back from their education and are concerned about titles and offices and parking privileges. So I take all of that away from them and send them to the hospice of the dying. There they hold people's hands, and pray with them and feed them. After six months of that, they typically get things straight again and remember their vocation to be a spiritual presence first, and a professional presence second."

Are we willing to yield ourselves to the Spirit, allowing God to use our weaknesses, making our lives unpredictable, and being willing to go where we don't wish to go? There is an exciting adventure out there if we are willing to be Spirit-driven. Look what happened in Jerusalem on that first Pentecost.

This fall at Our Savior's we will be doing 40 Days of Purpose, using Rick Warren's book, The Purpose Driven Life. I believe that experience has the potential to stir this place up with Spirit-Driven Lives.