

# **Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion**

**Date** : 14 May 2023

**Sermon Title** : Walking by The Spirit: Heart

**Speaker** : Rev Reuben Ng

**Text** : Ezekiel 36:25-27

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This week, we start a new 2-part sermon series on “Walking by The Spirit” and today we will be focusing on the ‘Heart’. It is commonly seen that if someone thinks he can succeed or triumph over something, then he will try; but if he thinks he cannot ever succeed at all, he will likely not bother to try. We will most likely try when there is a possibility of success.

If we bring this understanding to ‘holy living’ which our God who is an utterly holy and righteous God calls His people to, to be a holy and living sacrifice, living our lives for God, according to His ways and in His will, we would be wondering if we would be able to do so. If we are faced with living up to God’s expectations of holiness thinking that we will never be able to achieve it, we may end up not even bothering to try. Some examples may be the belief that anger, jealousy and envy are a part of us which we cannot change, and we continue in such ways despite knowing that this saddens God. By doing so, we lapse into a cycle of sin and asking for forgiveness from our gracious and merciful God until death, where we hopefully meet Him face-to-face. However, sin is very powerful and has terrible consequences. Do we really want to continue living in our sinful ways due to the belief that we cannot live holy lives and face the serious consequences of sin?

## **Background**

Let us look at the backdrop that led to these verses in Ezekiel 36:25-27 from the history of king Solomon who was king of the full kingdom of Israel.

### United kingdom of Israel

931 BC: King Solomon’s death

930 BC: Israel, kingdom of king Solomon was split into two regions - Israel (Northern Kingdom) and Judah (Southern Kingdom) because Solomon sinned against God.

### Northern Kingdom of Israel

721 BC: Was destroyed by the gentile nation of the Assyrians because the Northern Kingdom of Israel too sinned against God and did not walk in His ways or lived according to His will. God allowed the punishment to come in the form of the Assyrians to destroy Israel.

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## Southern Kingdom of Judah

This kingdom lasted a little longer as there were some good kings who led the people towards God, giving Him glory due His name and did things which were right in God's eyes. Even though there were evil kings and sin, these good kings helped, and it mattered as Judah lasted till 586 BC.

605 BC: Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem but did not destroy it or the Temple, some were captured to Babylon including Daniel – God's 1<sup>st</sup> warning to Judah.

597 BC: Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem but again did not destroy it or the Temple, some were captured including Ezekiel – God's 2<sup>nd</sup> warning to Judah.

593 BC: Ezekiel appointed prophet by God to pronounce God's plan to His people. He prophesied that Jerusalem will be destroyed, and the Temple of God will be pulled down.

586 BC: Ezekiel's prophecy fulfilled – Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple of God and the people were exiled.

Throughout the course of the above events, the consequences of sin were clear. After talking about the judgment of God for their sins, Ezekiel then moves into talking about how God will restore His people, and this is where the portion on Ezekiel 36:25-27 is located.

## **Ezekiel 36:25a – I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness**

A full cleansing - By the sprinkling of clean water to wash us clean, we are rid of all our filth, sin, and transgressions. We receive a full cleansing in both the private and public aspects of our sin such as in thoughts, actions, and speech.

## **Ezekiel 36:25b – and from all your idols I will cleanse you**

Freedom from sin – When we prioritize idols (anything that takes priority in our lives) over God, we give these things power over our lives. When God cleanses us from all our sins, He frees us from the power of sin because He removes the hold that these idols have in our lives.

## **Ezekiel 36:26a – I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you**

If the inclination within our hearts is to head back into sin because our heart is deceitful and sick (Jeremiah 17:9), we will always be led back into the power of sin. God knows that the heart of the matter is the heart, and He does not want us to be caught in an endless cycle of sin and cleansing.

A new heart of flesh – God does not simply place a new heart within us and we have two hearts, old and new, warring against each other.

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## **Ezekiel 36:26b – And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh**

He replaces our old heart – He removes our old heart of stone which is deceitful and sick, dead towards God, cannot be moulded and is unable to relate to Him, with a new heart of flesh. This new heart is beating, can be moulded and nurtured by God.

## **Ezekiel 36:27 – And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules**

Empowerment from within by the Holy Spirit – In addition to being cleaned, freed and given a new heart, we are also empowered and enabled by the Holy Spirit residing within us to walk in God's ways, according to His will.

### **Being born again**

God's promise of this restoration happens through what Jesus has done. But what does it mean to be born again in Christ? (John 3:3)

- Being born again is a condition for seeing the Kingdom of God (John 3:3). It is not an external transformation of the body nor an erasure of the mind.
- We are born again as new creations where the old (heart of stone) has passed away and the new (heart of flesh) has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- This is also seen in the establishment of the new covenant (Hebrews 8:10a) based on the blood of Christ as opposed to the old covenant based on the blood of bulls, lambs, and goats.
- Instead of the ten commandments being carved on external stone tablets in the Old Testament, in the new covenant, when we are given new hearts of flesh, God's laws are written directly in our hearts. (Hebrews 8:10b) With the laws being no more external, they have now become part of us.

This means that a child of God who is born again should be transformed on the inside to be empowered to walk in God's ways and according to His will. When we walk by the Spirit, we will not gratify the desires of the flesh such as anger, cheating, lying, jealousy and envy. (Galatians 5:16)

### **CONCLUSION**

If we have accepted Christ and yet continue to claim that we cannot live according to His will, this is in opposition to the Word of God. God's Word tells us we have had our heart of stone removed and given a heart of flesh. Let us choose not to follow the fleshly desires which leads to sin but follow our heart of flesh where the Holy Spirit is and God's Law is written, so we may walk in God's ways according to His will. When

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we lean on the Holy Spirit, temptations will have no power over us. May our belief be aligned to God and the will of God.

## **A. Review Sermon Application**

***Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.***

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

2. Have a volunteer read Ezekiel 36:25–27 aloud slowly.

- a. Which of the following aspects of restoration as God's new creation do you identify with?
  - Full cleansing
  - Freedom from sin
  - New heart of flesh
  - Empowerment from within by the Holy Spirit
- b. If you do not identify with all of the above in 2a, reflect on why this is so.

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## **B. Relate Sermon Content**

***Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.***

3. The new heart given to God's new creation has the Law of God written on it as it is no longer external but has become a part of us.
  - a. Recount the latest situation in which you were faced with a choice between temptations of the flesh and leading a holy life. Was God's Law written in your heart evident in the way you responded?
  - b. What is one struggle you face in responding with God's Law in your heart?
  
4. When we are born again in Christ, we are new creations, able to live holy lives according to God's will through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.
  - a. Do you believe in the above statement? If not, why?
  - b. How do you feel towards temptations and sins, knowing that born again Christians have been gifted with the capacity to walk in God's ways?
  - c. How can your group members encourage or help you to walk by the Spirit in the following week(s), till your next meeting?

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## **C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action**

***Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.***

5. Share your testimony on how God transformed you by replacing your heart of stone which was deceitful and sick, with a heart of flesh that can be moulded and nurtured by God.

OR

Give thanks to God for giving us His Holy Spirit to empower us to walk in His ways and according to His will.

6. With a prayer partner, pray about what both of you have shared during this session and commit them to God. Ask for guidance from the Holy Spirit to lead you according to God's will in your life journey especially in times when you face challenges in overcoming your fleshly desires.

Pray for your group and our church to have our hearts and actions in alignment with our holy and righteous God so that empowered by the Holy Spirit, we may persist in our attempt to live holy lives in accordance with His will and live up to His expectations of holiness.

### Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. Open The Eyes Of My Heart – Maranatha! Music  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwqpKD-qBt4>
2. Thank You Jesus For The Blood – Charity Gayle  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbCnh5Q2o1Y>
3. Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone) – Chris Tomlin  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jbe7OruLk8I>

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