Romans 8:13-14 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Have you seen it yet? The new movie that is out based on a book that has been out for quite some time. The name of the movie is “The Shack.” I have had a few people I know see it and I personally have read the book two times. The book is very entertaining and engaging and I hear the same is true for the movie. It’s thought provoking. It’s emotional. But here is the most important thing for you to know. Do not base your faith, your theology on the book or the movie. The theology is absolutely false.

What about the Shack is false? Take the fact that the Shack denies the very existence of hell. Take the fact that the Shack denies the existence of sin. Or take the fact that the Shack implies that God will meet you according to your needs. Or the fact that the Shack speaks of Jesus dying on the cross and rising from the dead but never specifically gets to why that happened. I think that if Jesus died for sin then we need to speak of, come to grips with and grasp sin. Or if finally, as the Shack proclaims everyone is going to heaven and that all faiths and gods are a “revelation” of God, that’s clearly contrary to God’s Word. Or why does the Shack portray God as a Trinity if all gods are the same? The only reason to do that is to lead astray and cause Christians to finally and ultimately deny the truth and reality of God. There are a few other things, but I think you get the idea. So, if you want to be entertained and amused, then go see the movie. But again, don’t believe anything the   
Shack tells you about God. And if you are a Christian who goes to see the movie, when you get on social media and claim the movie is “great”, then be sure and qualify that it was only great because it was entertaining and engaging and not because you learned anything about God from it.

By the way, our text for today is certainly one that helps us to grasp exactly the way it will be when it comes to God and what God is about. It is a great text for those who are believers in Jesus and who desire to live by the Spirit. It is a great text for those who claim to be believers in Jesus but who clearly are living according to the sinful nature. I believe God’s Word is clear and what is taught here is clear. Let’s look at our text under the theme: **LET US LIVE. 1st. The Source of Life. 2nd. Dying by the sinful nature. 3rd. Living by the Spirit.**

It is clear that the Apostle Paul is writing under verbal inspiration, which means that what is written here is absolutely the Word of God. It is the Word that is to be believed no matter what people or this world has to say about it. Clearly as Paul is writing he wants us to think about and grasp the marvel of God’s Holy Spirit in our lives. Why? Because it is the Holy Spirit who is responsible for our faith and our resultant life of service to God. So the whole point of this section is to remind us of the life we have and are given by the Lord our God. It is for that reason I have themed this sermon: Let us Live!

But as we speak of these things and about the work of the Holy Spirit of God let’s take a moment to tell you why it all is true. Our first verse actually tells us why. It says, **“And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.”** There is it. Why does the Spirit work in us or why is the Holy Spirit a part of our lives? Because the work of Jesus is completed! Remember, the Holy Spirit of God was sent our way by the Father and the Risen Son Jesus on the day of Pentecost. Fact of the matter is, it is all a part of the plan through which God works in us for our salvation!

Get the feeling the Spirit of God is important? He is. He was instrumental in raising Jesus from the dead. And what this passage tells us is that just as the Spirit gave life to Jesus so that Spirit then passes this same life on to us. It is why he has been sent. Jesus told us these things in his discourse on Maundy Thursday night. He said, **“When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me” (15:26). “Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment; in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned” (16:5-10).**

Clearly what we grasp here is that the work of the Holy Spirit will be about Jesus. The Spirit will testify about sin and how sin separates from God. How those who do not believe will be condemned. The Sprit will speak of Jesus and his work of righteousness and how the resurrection and ascension of Jesus are key components of what we are to believe about Jesus. That we are to believe that Jesus is God and Lord and Savior and there is no other way. The Holy Spirit will testify to the fact that the Devil, the prince of this world has been defeated and his weapons of sin and death are null and void because of Jesus and the life the Holy Spirit will give you in and through Jesus. Yet, make no mistake, without the redemptive work, the resurrection and ascension of Jesus none of this means a thing. Because if Jesus stays dead in the grave, there is no faith or God. But since the Spirit raised Jesus from the dead then it is rather important for us to believe in Jesus and what the Spirit reveals in God’s Holy and inspired Word!

What do we learn from and in the Spirit? There is life and there is death. We are going to speak of the death part first. Contemplate what is meant in these words: **“we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die.”** That seems pretty straight forward. Ignore the Spirit, ignore God’s way and word and you will die. And I sincerely believe the term for death here is pointing to our eternal death. You cannot despise God, you cannot decide that sin is of no account! You cannot determine sin is your buddy and friend and God will just have to adjust to what you want. God says that this is not life but is death!

The other day in Bible class we covered and discussed a passage that I will share with you. I will share it because there are too many in the world who don’t seem to think hell is real. 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 **“He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord.”** Just a few thoughts. Everlasting destruction is not a reference to annihilation as some teach. The adjective “everlasting” implies the destruction is ongoing and forever. This is eternal punishment, a complete separation from the goodness and grace of God. There are many more passages that speak of this. Don’t decide that God’s Word is not God’s Word and that you can dismiss or ignore what he says. Hell is real.

So please, don’t take the attitude that your sin doesn’t matter. It does. Persistent, “God, I will do what I want to sin” is damning. You cannot live by the sinful nature and still be a true believer filled with the Holy Spirit. For those of you who don’t know where the sinful nature leads please note Ga. 5:19-21: **“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”** Okay, this warning is over. Please be led by the Holy Spirit and not the sinful nature.

Now let’s turn our attention to the other side, to life! Please grasp how the word life is used here. **“He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.”** Obviously the passage cannot be talking about our physical or earthly life for the verse mentions our **“mortal bodies,”** that our human bodies are given life. But if we are already living…if we are already breathing, heart beating beings, then what life is spoken of? The same life that was given to Jesus! Eternal life. Spiritual life! True life that will surpass and go far beyond the life we have in this world.

Just look at our text and see that this is true. Various phrases highlight this. **“But if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God…you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.”** Wow! Does all of this sink in? The Holy Spirit gives us, through the gospel in Word and sacrament, the gift of life or faith and with that faith the certainty of eternal salvation with Jesus in his kingdom.

That’s the simple and wonderful truth of our faith. God sent Jesus to be our atoning sacrifice and pay for our sins. We know this is true and a fact because Jesus was raised from the dead! And now Jesus and the Father send the Holy Spirit to grant us faith, to grant us life, true life, eternal life with Jesus because of the gift of his grace we are given. And then, one final little point…that faith we are given…that Spirit that is now in us…that Spirit urges and motivates us to live in accord with the Spirit. To live, think, act, and be in our lives, words and actions, a child of God. Following God’s Word. Believing God’s Word. Trusting God’s Word. Not because we have to, but rather because we can’t help ourselves. How did the text put this? **“We have an obligation.”**

What that means is that we have a moral debt. We owe God big time! Of course, we can’t actually pay him back the full debt. So in gratefulness and wonder, we do our best, we strive in our lives to be “God pleasing”, to in some way return to God the awesome thanks He deserves. At best we will only pay pennies on the dollar for the debt we owe, but God considers it awesome and wonderful that we even try. So we don’t live according to the Spirit to get anything, but rather grasp that we have everything because in Jesus is the gift of faith and eternal life.

I guess I think that is so simple and wonderful. We are God’s children, given of His kingdom. We are **“heirs and co-heirs with Christ.”** Again, contemplate the wonder of that. We, as heirs, stand to inherit the entire kingdom and holiness of God! It is what is given to us! That’s the reason for using the phrase “heir”. An heir gets what someone has determined to give you. It is a gift. God’s eternal life is a gift given in Jesus. No wonder we wait with eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. On that day, eternal life with God is ours, just because of Jesus and the life given by God’s Spirit. Amen.