

Walk in the Spirit – Part 2  
Romans 8

Galatians 3  
Galatians 5:1-18  
Psalm 63:1-8

Last time we were in Romans we started out in the first half of chapter 8, and really we only focused upon the first 2 or 3 verses which talks about the state of those who believe in Christ, in which Paul points out, after having painted a rather disappointing picture in chapter 7 of the constant battle and struggle against the sinful nature and desires of the flesh that ultimately in the end for all of those who are walking according to the spirit that there is no condemnation, there is no judgment, for the sins committed in this body are forgiven if we are the adopted children of God. Now as I explained last time as well, this does not give an excuse or license for sinful behaviors, on the contrary, as was Paul's point in chapter 7, showing the reality of the Christian life on this earth and the battle against the sinful nature of the flesh, the opposite of that is simply put, if there is no conflict or battle against the sinful nature and desires of the flesh then there is no spirit working in you, and if no spirit, then your faith and salvation is not real.

In chapter 8 Paul goes on to point out that walking in the spirit is the key central aspect of following Christ, and against those who are doing so there is no condemnation which is as he points out the opposite of the law. For the law by its very nature condemns the sinful desires and actions in the flesh. And that largely is it's purpose, it was given to instruct, and expose the simple fact that mankind, in and of himself is incapable of upholding the perfect and holy, just law of God. If the old covenant law was the measuring stick by which we were all judged whether or not we are worthy, then each and every single person on this earth would fail and there would be no hope of redemption, no hope of salvation, and our only expectation would be judgment for our failures. But, thankfully that is not the case, for one better then Moses has come, one greater then the law has come and he has fulfilled all of its righteous requirements and imputed his perfect and holy righteousness to your account through the death on the cross, so we can stand before him not as condemned sinners who have failed over and over again, but as forgiven son's and daughters of the most high God. Who have been given the spirit of God so that we may live as those who have been redeemed, unlike the external law which was an idle list of requirements and warnings, the spirit is the vibrant, living acting person of God ministering directly to those who are his children.

And that is what Paul is getting at here in chapter 8, to roughly sum it up, if you are looking to the law for your righteousness which is only concerned with the outward flesh, then you are yet dead in your sins, but if the spirit indeed is in you, then you are alive in Christ and the spirit will work within you to reflect that reality in your life, and this Paul calls a law in verse 2, he says, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." There are those who argue that if you are not following the 10 commandments and the old covenant laws then you are a lawless and thereby you can't please God, but that simply is not true, nor is it even biblical for in fact the scripture teaches the opposite, pay close attention to what Paul is saying here in this passage of scripture as we read it this morning. Let us go ahead and read, again looking at verses 1-12. ( read 1-12) Last time we were here we focused upon our reality in Christ as an answer to the struggles revealed in chapter 7, that our hope is in him, it is not in our ability to subdue our sinful nature, but in Christ's ability to forgive and grant us the strength to overcome the sinful desires of this dead body through the spirit.

This week we are going to talk on the nature of that strength and power we have been given to overcome our sinful flesh, how we wage war against it and as you can see by reading this passage, it is pretty explicitly clear, the answer to the war against our remaining depravity is not outward physical reform and law keeping, but keeping our eyes fixed upon Christ, and our hearts and minds focused upon what he has done for us, and all this we can do because of the Spirit which he has given ministers to us to do so. In this section of chapter 8, Paul describes the Christian life in the spirit through the sacrificial death of Christ.

He sets up a comparison between the spiritual realities of salvation through Christ, the risen Messiah, and the law which was given to Israel. As we are all aware, there are some of our Christian brothers and sisters who argue that now that we have been given the spirit we can keep the Mosaic law but even in our reading of this passage this morning it is clear that keeping the law is not the focus on the ministry nor the concern of the spirit, nor should it be the concern of the Christian. If this was the case, if it is true that the spirit allows, or creates in us the ability to follow the Mosaic law, then why does Paul put the works of the law against the works and ministry of the spirit in this passage? Right away, in verse 2, he says, “For the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” He is now free from the law which brought with it condemnation and death, judgment and guilt, and so to are we who are in Christ. In fact, many of us here are Gentiles and were never under the law and again if the ministry of the spirit was to point us to the law, why in almost all of Paul's writings does he rebuke those who would teach such.

Paul writes to the Galatians about this very thing as well, in chapter 1 verse 6, he says, “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel.” Again it is helpful to know, that these to whom he writes in the Galatian churches, are believing Gentiles, a people who were never subject to the law who are now being instructed to follow it, this “different gospel.” and we know in the context of the rest of the letter that this different gospel is the returning back to the law in chapter 3 he asks them, “O Foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth before whose eyes Jesus was clearly portrayed among you as crucified. This only I want to learn from you, did you receive the spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the spirit that you are not made perfect in the flesh?” And in chapter 5, he writes, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” And as we see back in chapter 1 of Galatians, verse 7, “There are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.” Men have come in, have perverted the gospel message to include the keeping of the law, teaching that the redemption that has been given by grace through Christ is not enough, and now you must work to keep it, this is a serious issue, indeed it is a life and death issue in which salvation and redemption are on the line, therefore Paul says, “Even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let them be accursed.”

This is the ministry of the law of sin and death that he is referring to in verse 2 of chapter 8, and here it is the same, he is pointing out to be law minded, to focus upon a reformation of the outer flesh is in fact death, verse 5 “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.” and in verse 6 he lays it all out plainly, “to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” There is no righteousness to be found in the law, there is no earning right standing with God law keeping, nor is keeping the law even the believers duty, but our focus and duty is to Christ, and only Christ, to have ones heart and mind focused upon him, to look to anything else is death, for he is the only way.

It is he who reconciled us to him, it is he who paid the price of judgment of sin on our behalf, the law has done nothing but point out our inability, which don't get me wrong, is just, and holy but it never brought about salvation, it pointed to the necessity of the one who came and died so that we through him may live.

Verse 3, "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh on account of sin; he condemned sin in the flesh." Mankind's fallen nature in Adam is exposed and made ever more evident by the law, Paul even said of himself, the law came and he died, recognizing his inability no matter how hard he tried to create in himself a worthy righteousness. The flesh is weak because of the curse, therefore the law only stands to condemn. It was never intended to save, but was given by God to Israel to protect the covenant relationship that God had set forth with them, a covenant which they repeatedly broke, which is condemned by the very law they sought to fulfill. Throughout scripture the illustration of marriage is used to describe our relationship with God, likewise it was also used to describe Israel. But the bible also said, Israel played the harlot, leaving her bride for idols and other gods. The law that was given to protect and to guide ended up being the very thing that stood to condemn them. Such is our state in Adam, by the curse we are married to Satan, it is a binding covenant only annulled by death. This was Paul's point in chapter 6, showing that our identity is in the death of Christ, that we to, through him died to that nature, severing that marriage contract bound in sin through Satan. Now, the law which would condemn adultery, has been satisfied through Christ, for he, as our figurehead died, and we with him so that we maybe free, no longer bound to sin and Satan, but free to live a life in him, as his bride, the one who loved us with an everlasting love and came and died in our place taking the due punishment upon himself so that we maybe free.

That is why Paul can say in verse 9-10, "because you are not in the flesh but in the spirit if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." This body of sin, this outer fleshly shell is dead, but the spirit that is within which by sin was also dead, has been made alive through Christ. This is why the law is no longer necessary, for it concerns itself with the flesh, with outer reformation, but any reformation to that which is dead does not change its status. It is the job of a mortician to dress up, and paint up the body to give it an appearance close to life, but as much as there is an attempt to create the appearance of life, in the end it is still a corpse. Such is the same with attempting to keep the law, if the body is dead, any trying to paint life over it through the keeping of the it, is worthless for you are only painting corpses. Life, in Christ is what truly matters, and that life is a spiritual life born from above. In a confrontation with the Pharisee's Jesus called them white washed tombs, beautiful on the outside with their fresh coats of paint and ornate architecture, but inside they were hiding rot, and decay for their minds were sent on the things of the flesh, on a reformation of the body, painting corpses. But the Christian is the opposite, for those who are of the spirit, and who walk according to the spirit, through the outside is dead, messy, tainted by sin and death, the inside is a shining bright temple in which Christ dwells.

But even these dead, sinful bodies of flesh have been given life as Paul says in verse 11." But if the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit that dwells in you." It is an inward reality flowing outward, because we are alive in Christ through the spirit, he works through these dead and dying bodies to do that which is pleasing to him. So much of the focus of ministry today is to get people to do the right thing, to live holy lives, to act as those who are right with God. But Paul says, if you are right with God all of these things will come naturally.

Focusing upon the outer workings and reformation of the flesh is nothing more than painting corpses, the target of the ministry and gospel of Christ is the heart, a true, meaningful and real change within the heart and mind of his people. Now there is nothing wrong with exhorting one another to good works, in pursuit of loving and serving one another, but it is an encouragement not a demand, for if the spirit is present, so to is the desire to pursue the things that are pleasing to God, as Paul says, the fruit of the spirit is evident, such should be the natural part of those who have been born in Christ, a spirit of love, peace, long suffering, kindness, gentleness, self control are the inherent family traits of God's children. And it is right to exhort, instruct, and patiently pursue such together as a local expression of the children of God. That is what we are doing here this morning, that is why we gather together to worship collectively, running this race of faith and belief in this fallen world together. Our time that we share together, is like a family gathering, sure it has the potential to be messy and dysfunctional at times, but we are still yet all family born in the blood of Christ, a new people who share the bond of spirit lead love which can and sometimes supersedes the physical bond of our own families.

God had designed it such, that we rely and need one another as we make our way through this dark world, putting to death the sin that is in the flesh...we are a gathering of broken people, made whole and complete by God, who come together to encourage, and exhort one another through the hardship of this life as we walk through this land of death keeping our eyes fixed upon Christ who awaits us in the promised land of life where we shall one day shed this dead flesh and join him. And that is our hope, that is what gets us through and lifts us up when we fall, is the eternal promise of God that he will lose none of his children, and they will all be joined with him in paradise. I was thinking on this over the past week, how every single thing in this life points us to the fact of its temporary nature. This world and all that is in it, is in constant flux, in a state of death and rebirth. This life stands as a reminder that there is nothing here for us that satisfies, for it all fades. Death, and loss is a part of this life, in fact I think if we were to describe the human experience in one word I would say, it is loss. We lose friends, we lose loved ones, we eventually lose our health, everything around us breaks and wears out and this is by God's design to instruct and show us the temporary nature of this life. It is easy to see how those who are lost in this world turn to vices to numb themselves of this reality, if it were not for God's revelation and salvation such would be each and every one of us. For how can you deal with the overwhelming constant reminder of loss in this world without having hope in Christ?

And that is the ministry of the spirit, as we go through these deeply human experiences on this temporary plane of loss, we seek that which is everlasting and eternal and we have our hope and trust firmly planted in the one who has made all things to reflect this reality and point to our need for him. The only one who can fill the emptiness in our lives, the only one who gives all of this seeming chaos purpose and reason, so that in the storm of this life we can like Jesus, sleep at the bottom of the boat knowing that our Lord, is the Lord of the storm, with a word he can calm it, and with a word he can bring us home. So we gather, awaiting that day, enduring the hardship in this body of sin and death, crying out in worship to the one who has given us life in the spirit, as we with joyful expectation await his emanate return, walking together in the spirit as the people of God.