

Abba Father
Romans 8:12-17

Colossians 2

Colossians 3

Responsive Psalm 146

This morning we are going to pick back up in Romans 8 in which Paul instructs his readers in the practical aspect of the spiritual teaching that he has been giving. As we have seen now, he has laid out the internal war against sin that rages on within the Christian showing that this body is weak in the flesh, and that sin is an ever present constant that we must pursue to put to death. But thankfully our hope is not in our ability to do so, but rather it is in God, who has made a way out from under the sin that so easily ensnares us. That way out, is through Jesus, the promised Messiah who has come and paid the penalty for those sins, so that we may live as those who have been reconciled and redeemed, not because we have reached a point of sinlessness in the flesh through law keeping, but because he, the perfect Lamb of God laid down his life for us, paying the penalty of our sins.

Living in this reality, knowing and believing that Christ died for you, as a sinful, unworthy individual is central to not only walking in the spirit, but it works within us worship as well when we meditate upon our standing with God through his Son, us, the unworthy have been made worthy, not by what we have done, but by Christ and Christ alone. I don't know about you, but that makes sin all the more vile and dreadful to me, to know that my sin and rebellion has brought Christ to the cross, where I should be met with judgment, grace was given, where I should be met with punishment, mercy has been given, where I should be met with death, life was given. Christ has taken all that we deserve upon himself so that we may have life in him.

This new life that we enjoy in him, is a life in the spirit, which works in us to will and to do that which is pleasing to the father. This work of the spirit encompasses the entire life of the believer, working in the desire to do that which is pleasing to our father, and through that desire the spirit works in what we also do. That is why Paul says to those who are in the spirit there is no condemnation, there is no judgment and there is no law for the actions of the body reflect the reality of the spirit. If you have the spirit, it will be reflected in your daily life. Which is what Paul is getting at here in the passage this morning, We will be focusing this morning on verses 12-17 but I want to go ahead and read again from verse 1 to get the full context and sense of what Paul is saying (read 8:1-17

Christ by his death has given us all, throughout scripture the gift of redemption through his blood that has been given to his people is likened to being the most precious treasure, a treasure that is so precious that it is worthy of sacrificing everything to gain. There is nothing greater than to be in right standing with the God of the universe, to be able to come to him as his children whom he loves, as opposed to being separated from, and subject to his eternal judgment and wrath. It is to Christ that we owe everything, for he has given us this treasure, brought us into the family of God, and has made us worthy to sit at the table of the most high. So, we worship and praise him for this free gift of his mercy and grace, and we live our lives in service of the gospel which brought us life. Our obligation is to prepare for his return, and to not live our lives as those who are destined for judgment but rather has those whose lives are redeemed, and secure in him.

Christ not only redeemed us through his death, but scripture likens us to his bride that he will one day gather up, so we are to wait and prepare for that day. We have been betrothed to him, and there is an obligation to live a life that is pleasing to him. But as we talked about last week, that isn't living a life defined by law, but rather it is a life in which the living and vibrant spirit of God works through us. For the law condemns, and convicts, but the spirit brings life, he directs and instructs working and shaping the heart to conform to the image and person of Christ. As we pursue a life in the spirit, the outward reformation that we would seek by law keeping naturally occurs. For if you live by the spirit, you will not be a slave to the lusts of the flesh. The desire to follow Christ, and please him through the works of the spirit supercedes to the temptation to fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

We as humans live in a cause and effect world, it has been a part of the human experience from the beginning. As a child your parent tells you not to touch a pan because its hot, you rebel, curiosity gets the best of you, you disobey and touch the pan and are subsequently burnt. Cause and effect, a decision was made with the unsurprising appropriate outcome. And it is this mindset to drives us I think to a more law like thinking, one of failure and punishment, and honestly sometimes the thought of possible punishment is what keeps us from trying to touch that hot pan. But that is not how God works with his children, I don't believe that there is some divine punishment for our actions, yes, there are ramifications to decisions and actions, there are predetermined outcomes but I think we need to get away of this idea that we suffer because of judgment, we have all heard it before...going through some difficult moment in our lives, and there is inevitably the friend or family members who says something along the lines of this must be a punishment for something you have done. Look at all Job went through, was that a punishment for something he had done?

That was kinda of the point of Job right? That Satan afflicted him though he was not worthy of such a plight, but through it all he kept his faith and trust in God, even when all others abandoned him. God did not allow Satan to afflict Job because he was punishing him for his sins, and likewise we need to get away from the idea that this is the case within our own lives as well. We live in a sinful fallen world, where tragedy, loss, and struggle is a part of this life. But, it is not in this life that we find hope, it is not in a hope of ease of living or finding a lack of adversity, our hope is in Christ who is our deliverance from all of these things. Paul says to be constantly focused upon the carnal, the concerns and cares of the world, seeking after the things that bring joy in this life, if that is our main focus, and our main goal then the end of that life is death. OF course I am not saying as Christians we do not pursue happiness, or pleasurable things, but as Christians we do so understanding that is not our purpose nor our hope, for all things things will fade, that which may bring happiness today will be gone by tomorrow.

We are eternal spiritual creatures as well as physical and it is ingrained in us to have a desire for deeper meaning and purpose, why do you think all this new age and pagan stuff is becoming more and more popular, people are experiencing the meaningless emptiness of life and are seeking answers, albeit all in the wrong places. That is one thing that the COVID lock-downs achieved, separating, and shutting everyone off made ever person have to be alone with their thoughts, distractions were harder to come by, life was no longer so hectic there wasn't moments of silence, and all the news around us was grim and dire, fear running rampant and for some it still is. This experience exposed that emptiness in the lives of many people who filled it with business and experiences and largely what we are seeing in our society today is people seeking to fill that hole with something, jumping on these politically motivated band wagons, stirred up in fear and anger seeking purpose and afraid for their future.

But in Christ, we have peace from all of this, for we know that all of this is only for a time, and that time in the grand scheme of eternity is barely even a noticeable blip. To be spiritually minded is to rest in Christ through adversity and trials, through temptations and hardships knowing that in him we are secure no matter what happens to these bodies. Our fullness, our joy, our life is in him and he ministers this reality to us through the spirit, daily as we are reminded of him, what he has done, and who we are in him. Again this is why prayer and reading scripture is important in our daily lives, moments of quiet communion with the father as we grow in our faith and understanding, learning to be more like him each and every day, laying our troubles and cares at the feet of the one who has created and maintains all things, and who loves us as his sons and daughters.

Verse 15, “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out Abba, Father.” Abba, is an Aramaic word, which...of all things, means Father. What is happening I think in using this as a name of God is pointing out a few things, 1, that he is the father of all, the father of fathers, there is no greater, no higher, no better Father than God. The term Abba was also used to explain the fatherly relationship, one of trust, affection, confidence, Abba signifies a close, intimate relationship between a father and his child, and such are we who are his in the spirit are able to cry out Abba Father, for he is very much the affectionate, trustful one in whom we can find confidence and comfort. This is a life changing reality that we are able to call upon the one true God, but not as a god with his subjects, but rather as a father and we his beloved children. We who were once at enmity against him because of our sin, have been brought near and are now his children.

And because of this change of relationship through Christ, he no longer deals with us as enemies, as those worthy of punishment for our sinful flesh, but rather we can boldly approach him in full assurance of faith as his children. Instead of running from him and trying to hide our sin like Adam and Eve, we can run to him for forgiveness.

This reality is the driving force behind living a life worthy of our calling, having our life reflect the inward reality of this closeness that we share with God, which is the ministry of the Spirit which as Paul says in verse 16, “bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” There is an assurance, a confidence, there borne of the spirit that is largely unexplainable, there is the age old constant question, How do I know I am saved? Paul's answer, those who are Christ's have the spirit, those who have the spirit will be led by the spirit, and that spirit bears witness of the salvation reality that exists within you.

I spent quite a few years wrestling with this question, but ultimately my answer fell upon resting on the sovereign grace of God. It didn't matter what I thought, or how I felt about it the matter, my life is either in him, or it isn't, and it is he who calls, it is he who gives the gift of faith and if I am his, then why am I worried about whether or not I am saved? The doctrines of Grace settled my heart in the matter, for we worship a glorious sovereign God who had adopted us and he will not forsake nor lose one single child. I think that it is good to wrestle with such questions, scripture tells us to test our faith to see if it is true, doubt is an ever a present reality in this flesh for our lives are full of the unknown, but in God there is stability and peace through the instability and doubt of this life. If you are loved by the sovereign creator of all things, who sent his son to die, for you, who has given his spirit to minister and guide, then you have nothing to fear in this life. The answer to the doubt in salvation, is Christ, go to him in prayer, seek after him, him out, and test your faith so that you can have confidence in him and his love toward you.

Ultimately, the answer to, how do you know you are saved, is simply, you know. For the spirit bears witness to this truth, calms the doubts and fears, as you rest in the arms of the father, who first loved you. Don't look to your outward life and failures as some standard or test of belief, that is the whole point that Paul is making here, as long as we are in this body, sin, and failure is a part of us, but it is a part that is dead to us if we are alive in the spirit, and it is the spirit within us who testifies to our redemption, who convicts us of our sin, who drives us ever onward in the race toward the prize, and if you have the spirit, you are a child of God, and if a child, then heirs with Christ, who find in him blessed peace and rest knowing that in all the uncertainty and temporary nature of this life the one constant for the believer, is that Christ died for our sins, and we are the cherished loved children of a loving, forgiving, gracious father, to whom we can cry out, Abba Father.