

## The Law of the Spirit of Life

Romans 8:1-11, June 6, 2010

Trinity Sunday I

Beloved of the Lord.....Years ago when I was a child, I remember being at my grandparents house just a few blocks down the dusty dirt road where we lived in Sioux City. My grandpa was Reverend Tobias Pederson, and my grandmother's name was Gertrude. Outside their house they had an old-style washing machine, the kind with two rollers pressed tightly together. After the clothes were washed or even scrubbed by hand, they would be hand cranked through this wringer. The compressing action would squeeze most of the water out, hence the phrase "put through the wringer."

Sooner or later as Christians, we are "put through the ringer". We are wearied, beaten up, compressed by our problems, and weak. Though we look to the Bible for comfort, finding many Gospel passages, it seems there is always a phrase that brings the sting of the law. For example, listen to verse one. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." How do you hear this verse? Truly it is one of the sweetest verses in all Scripture which we should commit to memory, but when we've been "put through the wringer" which phrase stands out in bold? It is the phrase "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit". Hearing this second phrase we reason, "But I have walked in the flesh, indeed I cannot rid myself of it! No matter how much I may battle my sin hating, detesting, and loathing my flesh, I do indeed find myself committing the sins of the flesh! How am I to walk in the spirit as God commands?"

Today then dear Christian for our benefit, for our edification let us understand just what this means, to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh. For just as there are essentially two disagreeing persons within us, the old man and the new, there are also two corresponding yet conflicting laws in this world: the law of sin and death, and the Law of the Spirit of Life. Thanks be to God there is one Law which delivers us from the other.

I. The law of sin and death. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Notice here two laws are clearly mentioned: the Law of the Spirit of Life, and the law of sin and death." The FIRST law of sin and death is the curse of the law – namely God's curse, His punishment, upon all who break His commandments. When God curses a person for sin, and keep in mind we were all born in sin, the law of sin and death declare the condemnation of all sinners. "The soul that sinneth

it shall die." When God curses someone, it means God denounces, He utterly detests, loathes, and execrates, the person. To execrate is to intensely loathe with a passionate fury. When the Bible says "Our God is a consuming fire", this means His force, His fury, His anger against all sinners is unquenchable, unstoppable, and unimaginable for the human mind. But who exactly falls under this horrible curse? Deuteronomy 27 answers, "Cursed *be* he that confirmeth not *all* the words of this law to do them." If we break even one commandment, love this world or possessions more than God, lust, covet, bear anger in our heart, have pride, etc., we fall under God's most bitter curse, the curse of death and hell, God's eternal condemnation. The "law of sin and death" equally condemns all sinners. And it matters not if any man shakes his fist at God saying "That's not fair", for God is God, He is always fair. "A God of truth and without iniquity, just and right *is* he." Those who shake their fist at Him, will one day find God shaking His fist at them and God will say, "You say I am not fair with you? I sent you My Son, I gave you My heart, He died to set you free, He paid for your sins with His blood. This Gospel of My Son was preached in the pulpits and upon every mountain top, witnessed to you by my disciples and you heard it with your own ears yet YOU WOULD NOT believe!" Such unbelievers will then hear the most dreadful curse any man could ever hear, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

II. The Law of the Spirit of Life. From all this it ought to be clear the law of sin and death brings only the news of sin, death, and damnation to every sinner. The law cannot save but only condemns. "For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak, through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh." The law was weak through the flesh in that we by the weakness of our flesh, could not keep the law, nor even begin to do so for "they that are in the flesh cannot please God". Yet God would by His grace send, provide, and give His only-begotten Son. Humbling Himself, lowering Himself to our low estate, Jesus took on the "likeness of human flesh", with love His divine and holy nature was wrapped and clothed in the blanket of human nature yet not a sinful nature. On the day of Jesus birth even the angels in heaven gazed in wonder as their Lord lay in the manger.

Why did Christ come? He came to be made a curse. Galatians 3 says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree." When we speak of God then as a Judge who is about to curse all mankind to hell for their sins, Jesus with a

holy love steps between God and man saying "Curse me, and not them". When the Judge says, "But My wrath against their sin is hot and everlasting", the Son says "This I gladly suffer for their sake". When the Judge says "But I will utterly forsake you into outer darkness and you will feel the coldness of death" Christ says "I will gladly die if only they will live." Who can resist such arguments? What Judge would not accept such love? And so then the unthinkable happens: all of God's wrath against our hatred and anger, our coveting and lusting, our vanity and pride, is poured out upon the One that One who did not sin. Jesus, for our sake endures our hell, endures our death, He suffers, dies, and is buried.....the silence of that hour had to be deafening, yet "by His stripes we are healed."

What then is the conclusion of it all? Through the holy blood of Christ, there is a NEW LAW which declares all who were condemned by the OLD LAW forgiven, acquitted, and absolved. This Law of the Spirit of Life says, "There is therefore now NO CONDEMNATION to them which are in Christ Jesus". THIS "law of the Spirit" sets us free from THAT law of law of sin and death. This is the one and only law given by the Spirit of Life which brings life to all men condemned AND FAITH ALONE IN THIS GOSPEL IS NECESSARY TO RECEIVE IT. The division of the sheep and the goats on Judgment Day is really very simple: "Did you believe in My Son who came to set you free, or did you not?" Through the merits of Christ God cannot condemn anyone who believes in the merits of Christ, hence Jesus said to Nicodemus, "He that believeth on Me is not condemned." "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth!"

III. Minding the things of the Spirit. Thus when we consider all the people in the world, only unbelievers live under the dark cloud of that law of sin and death. They do all their "good" out of guilt of fear, but it is never love for God so "they that are in the flesh cannot please God". When Judgement Day comes they will stand naked in their sins and hear God's dreadful curse, only because they did not receive by faith the merits of Christ, though Christ had truly paid for their sins only wanting their eternal salvation. As for Christians, God has granted us the faith to believe and trust in an entirely different law, the Gospel law of God's declaration that all sinners through Christ are forgiven. There is no dark cloud above us, but only the Sonlight of God's grace. While the carnal mind is enmity against God, not subject to the law of God, "ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you."

Does sin rule the Christian? No indeed! "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hat made me

free from the law of sin and death." While sin is always present with the Christian, it does not rule us, for God's Spirit lives within. We now have free will, the power by the Spirit to choose and do God's will, the strength to strive and fight against sin. By faith we have a beginning in keeping the commandments. "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall life". "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." But mark well we must crucify this flesh again and again. By confession and repentance of sins, we daily nail our sins to the cross remembering "the blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanses us from all sin." Faith lives in, by, and through Christ, for outside of Christ there is only death, "for to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

While this body of death, this old man within always runs interference when we will do to what is right, we should find great comfort knowing the Holy Spirit does indeed live in us, hence we are not alone. By His Spirit we have the strength of God Himself who will help us within both to will and to do His good pleasure. Our will now conforms to God's will, and we have a beginning of good works. "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." Thus regarding the presence of sin in the Christian life, and how greatly it discourages us, Jesus does not want us to be discouraged, but rather remember by His blood we are redeemed from the curse of the law, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Finally let us "mind the things of the Spirit." "Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Arm yourself with the mind of Christ. As He willingly humbled Himself suffering all things for your salvation, likewise humble yourselves before men, and gladly suffer all things. When you are weary in body and soul, "put through the wringer", remember by His body and blood given in communion you will receive strength, and "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." "For the law of the Spirit of life hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Amen.