

I.N.I.

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost
August 28, 2013
Romans 8:1-10

In Christ Jesus, who alone redeemed us and through the Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to begin to live as God intended us to live, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

In our journey through Paul's letter to the Romans we have now come to probably the most well known chapter, chapter 8. This chapter can be summarized with these words: **MAN IS FREED FROM DEATH!** In this chapter the Apostle tells us how this has been accomplished and what that means for us in our individual lives.

If you listened carefully to the introductory words to this sermon, you heard that the Spirit makes it possible for us to begin to live as God intended us to live. How is that and how did God intend for us to live?

From God's Word we see that man was created in God's image. What a statement that is. God is free, unhindered by anything or anyone. His decisions are always freely made and they are always morally perfect, reflecting His nature of holy, unchangeable love. And God created our first parents, Adam and Eve, in the same way, morally free and morally perfect. That means that Adam and Eve had a free will, and their will always and freely could choose what was morally right. They had the ability to love the Lord their God with all of their heart, soul and mind and they loved each other perfectly.

But then, as we know, Satan succeeded in getting Eve to will to do that which was contrary to the will of God and both Adam and Eve rebelled against God's will and did not do what God wanted but instead did what God had forbidden. Their will was no longer freely devoted to God's will, but it was now enslaved, in bondage to their own sinful will and they followed that sinful will of theirs. Since that time every person is born in that same morally dead situation, unable to do what God wills, only able to do his own sinful will. By nature all of us are slaves to our own sinful desires.

But this is not what God intended or wants. He wants people to be freed from sin and be free to desire to do what He wants them to do and then to have the spiritual strength to follow through with words and actions. The question is: how does this become possible in the life of a person conceived and born in sin? Well our text gives us the answer by teaching us:

HOW PEOPLE ARE ONCE AGAIN ENABLED TO LIVE AS GOD ORIGINALLY INTENDED

I) THE LAW OF GOD WAS NOT GIVEN TO CHANGE MAN, NOR CAN IT CHANGE MAN FOR GOOD, BECAUSE OF THE SINFUL FLESH.

Shortly after the children of Israel had been freed from 400 years of slavery in Egypt God gathered them around Mt. Sinai to reveal His holy will to them. He told them His will in the form of Ten Commandments. This was to be the standard of their behavior toward Him as their God and toward each other in their daily lives. How did the people respond? They solemnly promised: **ALL THAT THE LORD HAS SPOKEN WE WILL DO.**

But what happened? Moses went up the mountain to get detailed instructions on the moral, civil and ceremonial laws and was gone for forty days. In Exodus 32 we read, **NOW WHEN THE PEOPLE SAW THAT MOSES DELAYED COMING DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAIN, THE PEOPLE GATHERED TOGETHER TO AARON, AND SAID, COME, MAKE US GODS THAT SHALL GO BEFORE US; FOR AS FOR THIS MOSES, THE MAN WHO BROUGHT US UP OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT, WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HAS BECOME OF HIM.**

You know the rest of the story. They melted down their earrings and fashioned a golden calf and worshiped it. They **SAID** they would do what the Lord wanted them to do, what He demanded of them in His Law, but they **DID** just the opposite. They had the Law, but they could not and did not keep it.

From this event we learn the basic truth that the Law cannot change people so that they will want to do what it demands and leave undone what it forbids. Paul writes in vs. 3 of our text: **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.

Last Sunday we heard Paul say this about the Law--7:12: **THEREFORE THE LAW IS HOLY, AND THE COMMANDMENT HOLY AND JUST AND GOOD.** The question is: How can it be that the Law which is holy and good and reveals God's holy will for man; how can it be powerless to affect a change in man's heart?

Answer: Because of the sinful heart! The Law **can** coerce outward conformity, but it **cannot** produce what God wants--the inner willingness and free desire from the heart to live according to His Law of love. Instead, the Law only has the power to expose sin, to condemn sinners and incites even more hostility and rebellion against God. Paul put it this way: **BY THE LAW IS THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIN.**

This is a simple, basic truth of God's Word but one that is unknown by the majority of the people on earth. Natural man believes that he can improve mankind by laws. "There ought to be a law against it," is the cry! "What we need is more rules and regulations, that will make people behave."

That is the way of moralism which overestimates the power of the Law and underestimates the power of sin in the heart. This is the same kind of thinking in the religious, semi-religious or even secular organizations which believe that by keeping the Law's demands they can earn salvation, please the Almighty--whoever that might be--and be good and righteous in the eyes of the Creator. But Paul destroys all such thinking and beliefs when he says in vs. 7-8 of our text: **BECAUSE THE CARNAL (FLESHLY) MIND IS ENMITY AGAINST GOD; FOR IT IS NOT SUBJECT TO THE LAW OF GOD, NOR INDEED CAN BE. SO THEN, THOSE WHO ARE IN THE FLESH CANNOT PLEASE GOD.**

There are no exceptions. The Law is indeed powerful. It is the voice of God pointing out right from wrong, and it severely condemns those who disobey its commands. But despite its great power, in the final analysis the Law is powerless to make people good in God's eyes. The sinful nature we are born with has the awful power to rebel against God and thumb its nose at His just demands. We can and do break God's Law. Thus broken by the sinful nature, the Law could never bring mankind to true righteousness before God.

Yet God wants people who will willingly and freely live according to His Law. What did He do to make this possible?

II) THEREFORE GOD SENT HIS SON TO SET US FREE FROM THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH

Chapter 8 begins with one of the most comforting statements in all of Scripture: **THERE IS THEREFORE NOW NO CONDEMNATION TO THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS, WHO DO NOT WALK ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, BUT ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT. WOW!!!**

This morning we have confessed our sins before our God. Tomorrow we will have to confess our sins again and the next day and the next and the next. We never measure up to our God's perfect standards of His Law. The Law never stops condemning us. It can't change or improve us. It can only condemn us. Yet in the face of this Law which continually condemns, Paul declares **THERE IS THEREFORE NOW NO CONDEMNATION...TO THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS.** Jesus Christ has become our shield against the condemning force of God's Law by being **PUT UNDER THE LAW FOR US AND BY BECOMING A CURSE FOR US.**

Paul writes in vs. 2-3: **FOR THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS HAS MADE ME FREE FROM THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH. 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.** There is now a new spiritual power at work in this world. Paul calls it "**The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.**" That force, that power, that reality of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ has set us free from the damning power and nature of the Law which exposes sin and leads to death. Without Christ's life, death and resurrection every single person would die eternally as the Law demands, a victim of the Law's condemning power. But in Christ, God "**condemned sin.**" In other words God told accusing sin to "be quiet." It no longer has any legitimate complaint or accusation against the sinner, because in Christ **THE**

RIGHTEOUS REQUIREMENT OF THE LAW (HAS BEEN) FULFILLED IN US.

Christ's holy and sinless life earned for us the righteousness we couldn't earn or merit, and His innocent death paid for the guilt and punishment of every sin we ever committed. Therefore God looks at us now as righteous, freed from sin. But now in Christ, we have not only been set free from sin, we have been given the power to willingly, freely live for Him. That's our third point:

III) THE HOLY SPIRIT REGENERATES US IN CHRIST, EMPOWERING US TO LIVE IN LOVE AS GOD INTENDED.

We read again vs. 4: **THE RIGHTEOUS REQUIREMENT OF THE LAW (HAS BEEN) FULFILLED IN US WHO DO NOT WALK ACCORDING TO THE FLESH BUT ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT.** When the Holy Spirit brings the blessings of Jesus' work to an individual, by working faith in his heart, that person now begins to walk according to the Spirit rather than according to his flesh. The force that now controls the believer's life is the Holy Spirit. Paul tells us there are only two ways to live in this life: according to the flesh or according to the Spirit. We read in vs. 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.**

What a contrast! An unbeliever walks only according to his flesh's desires. Now that does not mean that he is always sinful in sexual perversion and immorality; always involved in cursing or murder or stealing, etc. Living according to the flesh can include that, but it also can include one who is morally upright, outwardly living according to the Law, but is living only for the riches, pleasures, successes, comforts, recreation and security that this life has to offer.

It's still all flesh. Flesh--the sinful nature--can rise no higher than outward conformity to the second table of the Law: loving man as he loves himself. The flesh--the sinful nature--cannot even begin to love the Lord whom he does not even know.

On the other hand, those who have been "born again" by the Spirit, regenerated through the Good News of Jesus, walk according to the Spirit. They seek first the things of the kingdom; they value this Good News as their greatest possession; they strive to serve the Lord with gladness; they willingly, freely, lovingly offer the Lord first-fruits of their time, talents and treasures; and they gladly give of their time and effort to bring this Good News of Jesus to others.

In vs. 6 Paul lists another contrast: **FOR TO BE CARNALLY MINDED IS DEATH, BUT TO BE SPIRITUALLY MINDED IS LIFE AND PEACE.** The person who is a slave to his own desires and sinful lusts; is really dead in sins. That person is not free, but is in slavery and is a dead man walking--spiritually. But the spiritually minded are led by the Spirit to confess their sins, repent of them and look to the cross; to Jesus' shed blood for full and free forgiveness and then empowered by the Holy Spirit will put down their own desires and willingly, freely, spontaneously walk according to the Law of love.

Paul mentions one more contrast. We read in vs. 9-10: **BUT YOU ARE NOT IN THE FLESH BUT IN THE SPIRIT, IF INDEED THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELLS IN YOU. NOW IF ANYONE DOES NOT HAVE THE SPIRIT OF CHRST HE IS NOT HIS. AND IF CHRIST IS IN YOU, THE BODY IS DEAD BECAUSE OF SIN, BUT THE SPIRIT IS LIFE BECUASE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.** If you believe that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior then you have the Spirit living in you; for you could not believe except through the working of the Spirit. **NO ONE CAN SAY THAT JESUS IS THE LORD EXCEPT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

The Spirit empowers our new man to say "NO" to sin and to say "YES" to righteousness. That is why we need to continually feed our new man the Means of Grace: the Gospel in Word and Sacraments. That is why this morning's service is so vitally important for us, so that we drown the old Adam in his sinful lusts by repentance and that our new Man, empowered by the Spirit working through the Word, should daily arise and live for Christ. That is how God intended for us to live, and we **CAN IN CHRIST!**

But we all know how often the flesh overpowers us. Paul also knew that. That is why he cried out in the verses we studied last week 7:22-25: **FOR I DELIGHT IN THE LAW OF GOD ACCORDING TO THE INWARD MAN. BUT I SEE ANOTHER LAW IN MY MEMBERS, WARRING AGAINST THE LAW OF MY MIND, AND BRINGING ME INTO CAPTIVITY TO THE LAW OF SIN WHICH IS IN MY MEMBERS. O WRETCHED MAN THAT I AM!**

WHO WILL DELIVER ME FROM THIS BODY OF DEATH? I THANK GOD--THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD! SO THEN WITH THE MIND I MYSELF SERVE THE LAW OF GOD, BUT WITH THE FLESH THE LAW OF SIN.

Paul also wrote later in Romans 8: AND NOT ONLY THEY, BUT WE ALSO WHO HAVE THE FIRSTFRUITS OF THE SPIRIT, EVEN WE OURSELVES GROAN WITHIN OURSELVES, EAGERLY WAITING FOR THE ADOPTION, THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODY.

One day the same Holy Spirit that regenerated us, that raised Jesus from the dead, shall also resurrect our mortal bodies. Then what God originally intended for us shall be fully, perfectly and eternally worked in us.

What a glorious day and what a blessed eternity that will be.

Come, Lord Jesus, quickly come!

Amen.