

Life in the Spirit

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[0:00] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone and I'm one of the pastors here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church and it's my joy to bring God's word to you today.

We're continuing our series in the book of Romans. You remember that Romans is a letter written by the Apostle Paul in the 50s AD.

It's called Romans because it is written to the churches in the city of Rome and this letter is about the gospel, about the good news of Jesus' life and death and resurrection.

And as I've done the last couple weeks, I'm going to remind you again where we are at in the argument, the flow of the book of Romans because it can be complicated at times.

In chapter 5, we talked about the fact that we are saved by Jesus' life and death and resurrection. We are not saved by our works. We're not saved by anything you do.

[0:59] Chapter 6 then goes on to say, okay, you are saved not by your works but by Christ's work and but you can't do whatever you want.

You still have to live a life of holiness, which then takes us to this next question which we're still answering in chapter 8, which is how do we do that? How do we live that life of obedience to God? So chapter 7 then goes on to say what the answer is not.

Chapter 7 says the answer is not more rules. The law cannot create holiness. Holiness does not come from more rules.

Which then now we come to the payoff in chapter 8, which gives us finally the answer. Paul tells us holiness comes by the Spirit of God.

And so chapter 8 is a chapter about life in a Spirit. Life empowered by God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit. Two weeks ago, verses 5 through 8, we talked about how we live by the Spirit.

[2:07] We live by the Spirit by setting our mind on the things of the Spirit. The things of the Spirit are Jesus Christ and His work, His life, His death, His resurrection, and all the benefits that flow to us from that.

So we're living life, all of life, in light of Christ's resurrection. That's how we live in the Spirit. Then last week, verses 9 through 11, we saw that God, by His Spirit, also gives us new life.

It gives us new life, both now and in the future. We talked about the fact that Christianity is not just or merely new beliefs and new behaviors.

It is also a new power at work within you and a new heart. Because God, by His Holy Spirit, has taken up residence in your life.

Jesus lives in you. And that happens by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We have life now as the Spirit's at work, convicting us of sin, assuring us of God's love, making the gospel clear, among many other things.

[3:25] We have life in the future as we have a resurrection body. We get a new body that will not decay, that will live forever, that won't have sin and temptation, sickness, and disease.

So that, I've caught us up. That's where we ended last week. We ended with the new body, the resurrection life that we look forward to. This week, we're continuing this same overarching question of how we live in holiness, how we walk by the Spirit.

And we have a specific question this week, which is why? Why do we say no to sin and yes to righteousness?

Why should you obey God? And what does the Holy Spirit have to do with that? By the way, I bid off more than I could chew for this week.

It was extremely ambitious, thinking we would make it all the way from verse 12 to verse 15. We are only looking at verses 12 and 13. I'm not even going to read 14 and 15 for you.

[4:28] So 14 and 15 are in your worship guide. They are a problem for Monday, Matthew. But it is Sunday, Matthew. So I'm going to preach the same strategy we've been using, straight line from top to bottom.

So with that, I invite you to turn with me to Romans chapter 8, starting at verse 12, which you will find page 8 of your worship guide. Remember, as we come here, that this is God's word.

Jeremiah chapter 23 tells us that God's word is like a hammer that breaks a rock into pieces, which is a way of saying that there is nothing so powerful that God's word is not more powerful still.

And so that's why I invite you to read with me now Romans chapter 8, verse 12. So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

For if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word.

[5:41] Our Father in heaven, we do thank you and praise you again for your many gifts to us and your mercy and your grace, especially the gift of your Holy Spirit that comes and gives us new resurrection life.

We ask that you would pour out the Holy Spirit here and now in a powerful and extra special way among us as we come to your word, that you would open up our eyes, you would unstop our ears, you'd clear our minds, you'd soften our hearts, that we would be able to hear and see and understand and believe everything that you've written in your word.

And we ask these things not because we have earned them or deserve them. We know that we haven't and we don't. We simply ask for them in the mighty name of Jesus Christ.

Amen. I want you all to imagine with me, we're going to do a thought experiment, that you have two things. You have a free Saturday afternoon and you have an extra \$1,000.

Okay? There's a catch though. You have to spend that afternoon with someone and the person you spend the afternoon with, you have to give them the \$1,000.

[7:05] So you have this free afternoon, you have this \$1,000, but it's not actually yours, you have to give away. So that's catch one. There's another catch, which is you only have two options for who receives this.

Okay? Option one, you can spend the afternoon with someone who has mistreated you, stolen from you, lied about you, and lied to you.

So that's option one. That's one person you can spend the afternoon with. Second option, you can spend the afternoon with a friend who has sacrificed for you, helped you, and at one point, this friend even saved your life.

Now, who do you choose? Tough question, right? No, it's a stupid question. Of course, you're going to spend it with a second person, right?

That's obvious. Why would you even consider the first person? First person doesn't make any sense. Of course, your friend will receive all of this.

[8:16] We might even say, you owe that to them. It would be scandalous, actually, if you gave it to the person who mistreated you.

And that, my friends, is exactly what Paul is saying here in verse 12. He starts with a so then, which means in light of everything we've looked at in the previous verses.

And what have we looked at? Life in the Holy Spirit. So so then, because of Jesus' death and resurrection that results in the gift of the Holy Spirit, which gives you both new life now and in the future.

Because of that, we're debtors. We owe someone something. But we need to be clear who we don't owe anything to.

We don't owe anything to the flesh. We don't owe anything to live according to the flesh. And so once again, I'm going to remind you what the flesh is.

[9:21] Same definition from the last two weeks on page seven of your worship guide. The flesh is human nature as corrupted, directed, and controlled by sin.

Remember our question, why? Why do you obey God? Well, you obey God because you don't owe sin anything.

You obey God because you don't owe sin anything. And because you do owe God everything.

You don't sin. You obey God because you don't owe sin anything. And because you do owe God everything. And you owe God everything because of Jesus' resurrection and the new life that he gives to you.

The new life from the Holy Spirit that gives you something now, gives you something in the future. Verse 12, we are debtors.

[10:30] You're just not debtors to the flesh. You're debtors to God. Why do we say no to sin? We say no to sin because we owe it to God.

We owe it to God because of everything that's come before in chapter 8. Remember, that's why Paul says, So then, we owe it to God because the gift of life given to us through the Holy Spirit. Now, the word owe here can sound a little bit negative. We could end up in a weird place if we take it too far because God's gift of salvation is a gift.

We're not meant to think of it as we have to repay God somehow. That's not what Paul's getting at. I want you to go back to our opening illustration. Why did you choose person two?

At least, I hope that's who you chose. You chose person two because of the great love that they've shown you. Right? Spending the afternoon with them is not burdensome.

[11:42] You don't think to yourself, Wow, I really, you know, I really just wanted to take a nap. I hate that I have to be with this person who's been so kind to me. No, it's a delight. I think that's an easy choice.

Of course, I want to spend the afternoon with them. You're not resentful that you have to give them your \$1,000. No, you're thrilled. You're thrilled that you're able to do that.

It's small compared with what they've done. That's what Paul's telling us. Obedience comes from hearts that have been melted by the gospel.

We're thrilled. We're thrilled. By God's grace. It's a delight. By the way, God's mercy and grace and love to us must capture our hearts.

If you're a Christian, we've talked about this over and over, that is what drives you to the new life. If you really understand what Paul's been saying, verses 1 through 11 of chapter 8, everything else in your life pales in comparison.

[13:03] If you really understand, if you grasp what it means that you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God who is at work giving you new love, affection, and power, everything else is small in comparison.

So when sin comes calling, and suggests to you, commands you, tries to coerce you to disobey God, you can talk back to it.

You can say, you know what? You're not in charge anymore. In fact, you can even say it out loud if it helps. You can say, you don't run this place anymore.

And I don't owe you anything. In fact, quite the opposite. I'm going to give myself to the one who loves me. I'm going to give myself to the one who's given me new life through the Spirit.

We are debtors. Now, we don't just say yes to righteousness because we're debtors.

[14:34] Paul goes on in the next verse to give us his second reason. We say yes because it is a choice between life and death. verse 13.

For if you live according to the flesh, you will die. We have to have some qualifications here, remind you some basics.

This is going even back to chapter 5. You are not saved by your works. But, God does produce works in those he saves.

God does not save you based on anything you have done or will do. But, and, those God saves, he sanctifies.

holiness comes from and after salvation, but holiness does come.

[15:45] If you belong to God, if God has chosen you, he will also change you. if God has chosen you, he will change you.

Put it in a other way, if you keep living exactly the same way as you were living before, you will die. Heaven is not where you are headed. If you keep living exactly the same way you're living before, heaven is not your final destination.

That is not the metro line that you are on. Is there a battle against sin in your life?

Are you fighting against it? I certainly hope so. sin. That's the life of the Christian. The life of the Christian is what Paul says here.

[17:01] We're putting sin to death. If you are not fighting sin, if you are not battling for holiness, you should question whether you truly belong to God.

it does it does not matter how much theology you know. It does not matter how many events for the church you have planned.

It does not matter how many Bible studies you've attended, how many churches you've been a part of. Fighting against sin, concern for holiness, that is what the Holy Spirit stirs up in the Christian. Remember verse 9 from last week, and every Christian has the Holy Spirit. all said it already. If the Holy Spirit is not in you, you are not a Christian.

Is there a battle against sin in your life? Are you fighting against it? For if you live according to the flesh, you will die.

[18:31] And if you think that's too harsh, hear the words of our Lord Jesus in Matthew chapter 7. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Do you do the will of your Father who is in heaven? We've made it through the first half of verse 13, which tells us holiness is non-negotiable in the Christian life.

The second part of verse 13 tells us holiness takes work. We play a part. So we're going to break it down. But if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

And that first phrase is important. If by the spirit. Remember, this chapter is answering this question Paul's been getting at, which is how do we live lives of holiness?

And we've already seen it is not by the law. That's chapter 7. It is not by more rules. It is not by gritting your teeth harder. It is not by pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps.

[20:01] Remember, if God has chosen you, he will change you. He will change you.

It is by the spirit. Some of you are familiar with the Navy SEAL and influencer Jocko Willink who says, only person who can fix your problems is you.

And that's actually false. It's not true. And it's not true because your problems are too big for you to fix. That's the bad news of the gospel.

You must change, and you cannot change yourself. So what do you do? You need the new life that comes from the Holy Spirit.

The new life that gives you new desires, new motivations, and new power to put sin to death.

[21:12] Without the Holy Spirit at work in you, changing your heart stone into a heart of flesh, you have no hope.

By the Spirit. Now those new desires, those new motivations, that new power also leads to new action. That's the next part of 13.

Put to death the deeds of the body. And we've talked about this before. this word body does not mean that the body is bad.

What it means is this. When you sin, whenever you sin, it happens in your body in one way or another. Your sin is an embodied act. Sin is a presence that expresses itself in your embodied existence.

And so you must, you must put those sinful acts to death. You must end them. You must wage war against the presence of sin. Remember chapter 6, we talked about the war against sin, which tells us obedience requires specific commitment to change.

[22:28] It is one thing to say, yes, I'm going to follow God. It is another thing to say, I am going to stay away from people and places that cause me to drink too much.

it's another thing to say, I am going to put a filter or accountability software on my phone and my computer. It is another thing to say, I'm going to work on a budget so that I can be generous consistently.

It is another thing to say, I'm going to talk to a friend and say, yes, I'm tempted to gossip. Would you help me? It is another thing to go to bed on Saturday night.

So you can come here on Sunday morning to worship the living God. Putting sin to death, putting to death the deeds of the body means we take action, empowered by the Holy Spirit, enabled by our new power, love, motivation, and desire, but action nonetheless.

Action towards holiness. The person who is fighting this war doesn't dismiss their sin. They don't say things like, oh, you know, there's grace for that. God accepts me as I am.

[23:49] No, they're in a fight. They are putting to death the deeds of the body. Paul doesn't leave any room for us to wonder, right?

I'm not sure if there's anything more radical than putting to death. He's saying there needs to be something that is aggressive and determined. You are taking sin by the throat and strangling it. Not cozying up with it, killing it. Remember, Romans is the fifth gospel, which means that what Paul teaches Jesus first.

Jesus teaches this in Matthew chapter 5. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.

And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

[25:05] For if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. Now there's a million things we could say, I could say about the fight against sin, a hundred qualifications, and my goal.

this morning as I sometimes tell you when we're up against a massive topic, it's to say something on everything. And so as we think about our battle against sin, putting sin to death, the war of obedience, I want to point out two and only two things to you.

Two pastoral notes. First, if you want progress in your battle against sin, you cannot do it alone. if you want to put sin to death, that is not a solo journey. I've said before, the opposite of, and this doesn't come from me, the opposite of addiction is not sobriety, the opposite of addiction is connection.

God has not designed us to kill sin by ourselves. you have to tell someone, someone who will help you.

[26:40] When someone asks for help, I say, wow, I'm so proud of you. You are doing the exact right thing to kill sin, bringing it out into the light.

The Bible has something to say about this. James chapter 5, therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed.

Second, in our battle against sin, we must remember that God's law is life.

As we've seen many times in the book of Romans, it is in God's glory that we discover our good. In other words, it is the wrong way to think about this when you're tempted to say, you know, I'll obey, I'll miss out now, so I can gain in the future.

I'll forgo all these wonderful, beautiful things with some kind of hope of heaven. That's the wrong view because you are not missing out now, you are gaining now.

[27:50] God's law is always the path to life. God has designed the universe in a certain way and his commands tell us how to live within the grain of the universe, the way it actually brings us joy and hope and peace.

Remember verse 6, to set the mind on the spirit is life and peace. your heavenly father has given you his commands not as a killjoy, but as one who desires your good.

Do you want to be protected from the ravages of this world? Stay within the fences that God has given.

And when you see someone who you think is better off than you are, because they're not constrained by Christian ethics, you know, they're experiencing, enjoying all these things that you're not because of their sin.

Remember this, that person is neither joyful nor peaceful. They do not have what only the spirit of God can give.

[29:15] God's law is the way the life. I remember years and years ago I met with a Christian counselor and I was telling him about, you know, this other person in my life who had all these things and he just looked at me and he said, at what cost?

At what cost? God, your father longs to give you life. Longs to give you life now, he longs to give you life in the future.

We'll end with this, you see this on page eight of your worship guide. A fish is only free when it is bound to the water. A bird is only free when it is bound to the air.

And we are only truly free when we are bound to God. Walking according to his will is not an oppressive burden.

It is a liberating blessing. living in obedience to God revives our souls, makes us wise, and fills us with joy.

[30:42] For if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we do praise you and thank you that you come to give us life and give us life abundantly.

We ask that we would see your beauty, your love, that as we meditate on the great blessings that are ours in the gospel, it would warm and soften our hearts and we would respond with joy and obedience to you.

We ask all of these things, in Jesus' name. Amen. I invite you to stand for our closing hymn.