

3-29-20

Sermon: Where is Your Center?

Scripture: Romans 8:1-13, CTW Ps 130

Theme: As Christians we are to have a center- the Holy Spirit who guides us in all things and allows us to produce Christ-centered actions, or "fruit for the kingdom" as it is called. It looks like the church in Rome had forgotten that and had developed a selfish attitude. Paul called them and us to review and readjust.

### **I. The Life We Are Called To**

Maybe you heard the story of the man who owned a 1973 Pontiac classic car and loved it more than anything.

His instructions in his will were to bury him in his Pontiac. So when he died, that's what they did: they dressed him up in his suit, hat and white gloves, propped him up behind the steering wheel, and lowered him in the ground.

While he was being lowered in his Pontiac, one of his close friends said, "Man, that's livin'!"...Brothers and sisters, that's not livin'! That's dyin'!

If we live according to the flesh, we're dyin'! But if we live according to the Spirit, we're livin', and that is what we are going to be talking about today.

**A. Today, as we turn to Romans 8, we will see that Paul begins with this amazing declaration: Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:1-2.**

Romans 8 has been called the "inner sanctuary within the cathedral of Christian faith." It sets before us some of the most wonderful blessings we enjoy as Christ-followers:

1. We are free from God's condemnation.
2. We are indwelt by God's own Spirit.
3. We are adopted into God's own family.

4. We are destined for resurrection and glory, and
5. We are full of hope because of God's love for us and because of His promise to bring good to us through every circumstance of life.

**B. So how does this rehearsal of the glorious benefits of being "in Christ" fit into Paul's arguments in these chapters?**

The first part of the chapter 8 (vs. 1-13) has two purposes:

The first purpose is: it expands on the reference to the "new way of the Spirit" mentioned in 7:6 after the "interruption" in which Paul deals with questions about the law (7:7-25).

Paul is going to emphasize the work and importance of the Spirit in this chapter.

The second purpose is to reaffirm our new life in Christ with all of its blessings and responsibilities.

Paul started there back in chapter 5, but got detoured in chapters 6 and 7 where Paul dealt with the problem of sin and the law which are both threats to the security of our new life.

**C. As we move through verses 1 – 13, Paul challenges us to ask ourselves three questions:**

1. Where is our trust?
2. Where is our mind?
3. Where is our obligation?

**II. Where is Our Trust?**

**A. Let's look at verses 1-2: Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, 2 because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.**

Paul declares there is "No condemnation for those in Christ!" That sums up the early chapters of the book of Romans, especially the end of chapter 3.

If we have believed and obeyed the Gospel, then we have been declared right with God – the righteousness of Christ is given to

us. The Father punished the Son for our sins, and we will never need to be punished for them.

But this means more than merely deliverance from sin's guilt and punishment, it also means deliverance from sin's enslaving power. Paul is telling us that we as Christians are not condemned to a life of perpetual slavery to our sinful natures, we don't have to be confined to a life of constant defeat and failure...There's something better available to the child of God.

**B. How do we know? Look at verse 2: because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.**

The good news that Paul declares here is that there's another law or principle operating in our lives as believers: the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus – it is the controlling power of the indwelling Holy Spirit that frees us from the controlling power of the flesh.

Because the more powerful law of the Spirit of life in Christ is operating in us, we are freed from the law of sin and death and can enjoy victorious Christian living.

**C. But how is this deliverance made possible? Paul explains it in verses 3 and 4.**

Paul wrote: 3 What the law could not do since it was weakened by the flesh, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin offering, 4 in order that the law's requirement would be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Remember what the law can do for us? It can't save us! As holy as it is, it has no power to help us overcome sin. It is weak because of the material it has to work with: our flesh, our sinful human natures.

So God took the initiative and did something about it. He sent His Son to condemn our sin in His own sinless flesh: to judge sin, to pronounce sentence against it, and then to pay the just penalty for it.

He could do that because He Himself was sinless. Notice how carefully Paul describes the person of Christ: Paul did not say Christ came "in sinful flesh," because that would imply sin was in him.

Our trust or our confidence, then, is in Jesus' victory, not our own. There is no condemnation for us because of what He did for us, not what we do for ourselves. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ. (6:23)

Our job therefore is to put our trust in Christ and to walk according to the Spirit – and to walk according to the Spirit, we must focus our minds – which leads to question 2.

### **III. Where is Our Mind? (what are we focusing on?)**

Let's look at verses 5-11: 5 For those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit have their minds set on the things of the Spirit. 6 Now the mind-set of the flesh is death, but the mind-set of the Spirit is life and peace. 7 The mind-set of the flesh is hostile to God because it does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it is unable to do so. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him. 10 Now if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then he who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through his Spirit who lives in you.

#### **A. Paul here describes two very different mindsets: that of the Christian and of the non-Christian.**

The noun "mindset" and the verb form of the same word "mind set on" are distinctively used by Paul – 23 out of the 26 times they appear in the New Testament are in Paul's writings.

All of this has to do with our thinking, but it also includes our will. It has to do with our fundamental orientation, the convictions and attitudes that steer the course of our lives, REGARDLESS of what outside forces are pressing upon us!

Just having or possessing the Spirit isn't enough, we must cultivate a Spirit-led, Spirit-filled disposition of the heart and mind to be able to live in a way that pleases God.

These verses raise fundamental questions: how are we forming our minds? What are we exposing them to? What are we putting in them?

In our Adult Bible class, studying the Gospel of Luke, we have been exploring Spiritual Disciplines that can help us develop the mind of Christ.

We have concluded that a Christian who reads nothing but the latest novels, watches nothing but network television, and talks to nobody but unbelievers is never going to form the mindset of the Spirit.

**B. If all of the input comes from one direction (the world), then our mindset will reflect the value system of the flesh.**

If we are serious about progressing in the Christian life, then we must seek every day to feed our minds with spiritual food and spiritual programming.

We must have that new nature that Jesus spoke about when he told Nicodemus, "I tell you the truth, unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God...I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit...So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:3-8)

The Holy Spirit can change anything in us...if we will let him!

#### **IV. Where is Our Obligation?**

**A. God's gift of new life through His Spirit carries with it an obligation, but that obligation is not to the "flesh," the power of the old life, but our obligation is to the Spirit.**

Sometimes people deny this work of the Holy Spirit, because they are afraid we are saying that the person loses control, and that the power of the Holy Spirit is irresistible.

Let me illustrate it this way: at our house we have one of those garage door openers with an electric motor and those little remote transmitters that you put on the sun visor of your car, so that when you're driving home in bad weather you don't have to get out of your vehicle to open the garage door.

The garage door doesn't go up on its own, but when I push that remote button the door goes up.

But, as you know, the garage door can be also be disconnected from that electric motor so it can be operated manually. That's important, because there have been times when the power is out and I have had to disconnect the garage door opener and manually lift the garage door.

But did you know that even while lifting the garage door manually I am receiving assistance from the garage door springs?

I have had those garage door springs break, and let me tell you, it is hard to lift the garage door without them! But either way, whether I am lifting the garage door with opener, or manually, it won't go up without my involvement – it won't go up all by itself.

I'm still in control, but I'm not on my own.

**B. In the same way, the work of the Holy Spirit is not irresistible, the Spirit won't work against my will, but the Holy Spirit is a powerful force at my disposal.**

Paul wrote: 12 So then, brothers and sisters, we are not obligated to the flesh to live according to the flesh, 13 because if you live according to the flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (8:12-13)

Here Paul clarifies the importance of our obligation. We will ultimately inherit the eternal life God has promised only if we actively use the Spirit to "put to death the deeds of the body."

If we continue to live "according to the flesh," then we will suffer spiritual death. Here we see the tension between the "indicative" of what God gives us and the "imperative" of what we must do.

In verse 1, Paul boldly proclaims that "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." In contrast to that, in verse 13 he says that "if you live according to the flesh,

you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”

How can both be true? If there truly is no condemnation for believers, then how can we warn believers that they may die if they live the wrong way?

Paul is saying that it is so important for us to maintain a careful balance between what God gives us in Christ and what we must do in response to that gift.

God wants us to cling to the security that is offered in our justification in Christ, while at the same time striving to walk in the Spirit and put to death the deeds of the body.

The Spirit’s presence in our life inevitably produces fruit that is pleasing to God. But the Spirit will not work in us without our permission and cooperation.

In that sense, Paul puts the responsibility squarely on our shoulders: We need to put sin to death in our lives, but Paul makes it clear that it is only possible to do so through the Spirit who lives in us.

### **C. So, Let’s allow God to have His way in us.**

God’s power can make us what we ought to be! That’s real livin’ by the Spirit!

So, where is your trust? It needs to be in Christ’s sacrifice and righteousness.

Where is your mind? It needs to be on the Spirit and on spiritual things.

Where is your obligation? It should be the obligation to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh.

Take some time this week to pray and think about where you are in all of this...Amen? Let us Pray...