

ROMANS 8: THE HEART OF IT ALL #3

The Heart of the Gospel and the Book of Romans

Some messages are more important than others. The truth of today's message is critical for you and me to live a Christian life in a world that is unchristian. It is critical for you and me to live with victory, joy and faith in a world that is tough, violent, dirty and discouraged. Several have made the comment that in the last few years our world has changed. It is harsher, more crude, discouraged, sinful, hateful. I believe they are right. I see it all around.

- ✚ Go to a school board meeting and you will hear terrible language, disrespect and hatefulness. Often from people who go to church on Sunday.
- ✚ Go to myspace and read teenagers conversation-that is weird you say, it out in the open, you will see the F-word over and over. Coarse conversation has taken over. Talk of sexuality takes place with no blush.
- ✚ Spend time with church people and see that there is not much difference.

The crudeness of our world has rubbed off on Christians and we need to be cleaned up. God calls his people to live clean lives and we are not.

The answer is right here in this passage of scripture-Romans 8-the heart of it all.

Romans 8:1-4

¹Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in (belong to) Christ Jesus, ²because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. ³For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, ⁴in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

Prayer for God to teach us the truth of this scripture; we need to understand it. More than that, I pray that God will change us so we live the truth of this scripture.

Last week I pointed out that there are three laws or guiding principles in this passage of scripture that begins in chapter seven.

It is important that we understand these because these directly relate to how we live.

Law or principle number one – The law of Moses.

God's written laws that we are expected to obey. The law of God is the basis for the laws of our land. They begin with the 10 commandments. Moses got these from God. He gave them to the people. He explained and expanded these basic ten laws in the Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

The law was given to point out our sin and point us to God. When we break the law we are supposed to feel guilty. The word condemnation is a big word here.

The problem with the law is this. Just because we understand that we are not supposed to do something doesn't help us not do it. In fact Paul makes it clear in chapter seven that the opposite happens. When the light goes on in our understanding so that we know it is wrong to covet, steal, lie, lust etc. instead of making it easier to stop doing it, it makes it harder.

Last week I used my love for chocolate Chip Cookies. When I was young I would regularly eat a dozen cookies, a whole bag of chip Ahoys. When I understood that this might be gluttony and bad for me, instead of it getting easier to eat just one, it got harder.

The end of chapter seven powerfully points out a person who sees what is right and wrong and just can't keep themselves from doing what is wrong.

It is a defeated place to live, knowing what you should be doing and not being able to do it.

Paul gives us the reason for this. Let's watch the visual scripture clip of chapter seven one more time.

SERMON SPICE CLIP – CHAPTER SEVEN (from two weeks ago)

We have all been here. The critical question is will we stay in this discouraged place. This is the picture of a person who know what they should do and they just can't bring themselves to do it. Why not. Paul says that there is a second law or principle at play here.

Law or principle number two – The Law of sin and death

Notice the things he says about this law or principle. He describes it as controlling or actually enslaving us. It takes over and it is as if we have no choice. This law or principle has taken over our world and most people are under the influence of it. That is why language gets cruder and cruder, attitudes get more and more bitter and hateful. That is why violence is growing and in some place out of control. That is why immorality has taken over tv shows, conversation and our world.

Our world is serving its master-the law of sin and death.

Let me give you a very simple illustration from my time working as a lumber jack. Most of the time I cut firewood and then drove the skidder because falling trees is an art form. Getting the tree to fall where you want it is not easy. I have had two tree fall on top of me. Some of you are saying, "That explains a lot."

Cutting a tree that is perfectly straight up and down requires the ability to notch the tree properly and then cut it so that it falls where you want it to.

When you find a tree a that is leaning heavily to one side it is very tough. The farther the lean the more difficult it is. A tree will fall whichever way it is leaning; it is basic gravity.

Paul says that we have a basic principle or law in our lives, it is the law of sin. Sometimes it is called carnal nature, sometimes it is called original sin. It comes with birth; every baby has it. They are cute and loveable and innocent, but at the core they are also controlled by this law of sin. Just let a child go and see what they do. Will they automatically do what is right or wrong? Will they be controlled by their wants or other people's. I have never yet had a baby that was crying because it was hungry stop, to give time for mom to eat. It is all about them. The law of sin-it's all about me.

Living under the law of sin is discouraging; we all have tried it.

The good news of the gospel is the God sent Jesus into our world in the flesh-without the law of sin at work in him, to represent us all, die for our sins.

When we confess our sins to Christ and ask for his forgiveness we are forgiven and we no longer condemned.

But we still have the law of Sin at work in us. Being forgiven does not release us from the law of Sin and death.

Every Christian church I know of Catholic, Luthern, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Assembly of God etc. all preach that being forgiven doesn't release us from this law of sin or carnal nature.

Being forgiven, or being saved is a wonderful thing, but it can also be frustrating. You are forgiven and trying to live for Christ who is living in your heart, but you are also wrestling with this law of sin and death inside of you. It is the basic principle of self-centeredness.

That is why so many have described their Christian life as up and down. Paul says we don't have to live like this. There is another law or principle available.

Law or principle number three – The Law of The Spirit

Notice again what he says about this. Let me highlight some key words in chapter eight.

And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. (NLT)

Because when you live in him a new law takes effect. The law of the Spirit of life breathes into you and rescues you from the law of sin and death. (The Voice)



We have read the stories of journalist, soldiers, business men taken captive and held; these are heart touching stories.

If you ever saw the movie series Roots by Alex Haley, the powerful scene of Kunta Kinte having the shackles busted off is so powerful.

In chapter six Paul really expresses this idea of being set free.

6 We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. 7 For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin.

The word here means:

- to render idle, unemployed, inactivate, inoperative
- to cause a person or thing to have no further efficiency
- to deprive of force, influence, power
- to cause to cease, put an end to, do away with, annul, abolish
- to cease, to pass away, be done away
- to be severed from, separated from, discharged from, loosed from any one

The KJV translates it destroyed.

17 Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you. 18 Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living.

God's plan for your life and mine is that this law of sin and death would be defeated/destroyed/done away with in our life.

Which law are we living under? The law of sin and death-doing whatever feels good-condemned. The law of Moses-trying to do what is right and being frustrated or defeated? Or the best option The law of the Spirit.

Earlier I said the truth of this message is critical for our lives as individuals and for our lives as a church family. So many people have come to church, asked for God's forgiveness and then continue to live under the power/law of sin and death. Sometimes they are up and sometimes they are down. God has forgiven them and Christ is living in their heart, but they law of sin and death is still at play in their lives.

God never intended your spiritual walk to stop at forgiveness! He intended you to continue to the point of living life under the law of the Spirit-The Holy Spirit, not continuing to live life under the law of sin and death.

Why have so many of us stopped at the point of being forgiven, but staying frustrated? What is the next step pastor Lynn?

Look again at the words Paul uses in chapter six.

Let's change the emphasis from the result of the action to the process of the action.

6 We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. 7 For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin.

Notice we are crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power. And when we died with Christ we were set free.

We have to die. Not our selves, but the self that is living under the law of sin and death. That is the self-centered person.

The reason so few are living under the law of the Spirit, or under the guidance and control of the Spirit is because you have to die to get there and we don't like to die.

The biggest tricks of Satan is tell us that if we just confess our sins we are forgiven and that is good enough. But it isn't. We need to move to the next level, which is living controlled by the Spirit. We call this being filled with the Holy Spirit or being sanctified.

The reason people come and go is largely because they stop at forgiveness, get frustrated fade away. This is not God's plan.

You and I need a place/time of surrender. A point in our lives when we say to God, "I have been calling the shots and now I give my entire life to you. Please come and cleanse my heart and life, I am tired of living under the power of the law of sin and death and I want to live under the power of the law of the Holy Spirit.

Yes it is a process in our lives. Yes it goes on for the rest of our spiritual lives, but it has to have point of beginning. There has to be the point of death, this point when we surrender and ask God to cleanse our hearts.

People have been brought to the point of surrender by many things. Sometimes it is a temper that just keeps getting the best of you and you realize it is controlling you. Sometimes it is a specific temptation that you keep falling to.

This is a critical prayer time today. God is speaking to people's hearts and saying this is the need in your life. I cannot go any farther in this sermon than reading the

rest of this passage of scripture and then giving you a chance to surrender you all to God and be filled with the Law of the Spirit.

5 Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. 6 So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. 7 For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. 8 That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God.

9 But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.) 10 And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. 11 The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

12 Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. 13 For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

OPEN ALTAR FOR PRAYER