



Romans 8:1 - 11

Life in the Spirit

8 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 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 set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed, it cannot, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to

him. 10 But if Christ is in you, then the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

Thought: Spiritual Eggshells

Sometimes when we sit down to read the Bible, familiar words tend to appear. In today's reading, we see a lot of flesh, sin, and that we should be living our life to the Spirit. It almost feels like we are being told to walk on spiritual eggshells - how on earth are we supposed to live our lives without being mindful of the flesh? What is the flesh, anyway?

Thankfully Paul tells us in Galatians that the works of the flesh are "sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these" - so now at least we now know what he's talking about.

The spirit is the Holy Spirit, the transforming wonderful unknowing that gives us the power to focus on higher things, to bring us closer to God and to Jesus.

The reading starts saying there is no condemnation as we follow Jesus Christ, but this because we must live our lives according to the laws of the Spirit, the laws of God, and not to the laws mentioned in Galatians.

Paul really likes talking in opposites. We have the law of the Spirit of Life in Jesus / law of sin and of death; law "weakened by flesh" / Son sent to deal with sin; flesh / Spirit; death / life and peace; sin / righteousness. So it's the age old battle of good versus evil, right versus wrong, live or death.

Living with Jesus and the Spirit is about living with love for one another, for

following the path of God and doing our very best to Christ-like. God's grace has given us the chance to do this, to go about His creation and do works for Him. We are in the Spirit, because Jesus died for us, and the Spirit dwells in us. It doesn't mean we won't get things wrong, and that these scary works of the flesh have a chance of rearing their ugly heads - it's not difficult to get angry, to have quarrels, or to be envious, for example. God's grace is there for us in those times too. But ultimately we are led by the Spirit of God, to go out and do good things for people.

We have a responsibility to focus our lives on and in relation to God, and we are called in the Spirit to do good deeds. It's one of those great Christian paradoxes - gift and demand go hand in hand. What God demands of us, God has already given us, in this case that the Spirit of God is within us. We have an intimate link with the divine, thanks to Jesus, and so off we go to do the good deeds, because there is much work to be done.

Prayer

Gracious God,
Our paths may sometimes be difficult,
And we may feel we walk on eggshells to follow you,
But we know that thanks to your grace,
Your love,
And Jesus' sacrifice,
That we will be able to live by your Spirit.

We thank for you for your Spirit,
How it dwells in us,
Through us,
Empowers us,
To lead a life worthy of your majesty.

We are forever in your light,
Even if we may sometimes slip,
If works of the flesh may appear,
That we may be picked up again
To carry on following your path.

In Jesus' name,
Amen.

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