Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Law-Fulfilling Power of the Holy Spirit
Scripture: Romans 8:4-5
Code: 90-417

I've been meditating on this series that we're doing on the person and work of the Holy Spirit, of how serious a thing it is to attempt to worship God in a way that He rejects. And I keep going back in my mind to the book of Exodus and in the 32nd chapter of Exodus, while Moses was up on the mountain, getting the law of God, communing with God, people down below made a golden calf, and they had sort of an interesting explanation. When Moses came down and found this golden calf made out of everybody's gold thrown into a fire, the answer of the people was something like this: "Well, you know, we just threw it all in a fire and – look what came out." And that was their explanation, that it was some kind of an esoteric experience.

And the Lord spoke to Moses and said, "You're going to have to go down there because the people have corrupted themselves. They have made for themselves a molten calf and worshipped it, sacrificed to it and said, 'This is your God, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.'"

This was a total misrepresentation of the nature of God. And it was more than that; it was a total misrepresentation of the work of God because they began to do things that were ungodly, immoral, and ugly around that golden calf, and God called for the slaughter of thousands of them, as you remember, and before the day was over, many thousands died, and a promise came from God that many more thousands would die as well. The point being: You can't make God into any form you would like Him to fit into. You can't make God in your own image, according to your own specifications.

And in a sense, that is precisely what has been going on for a number of years now in the so-called Charismatic movement, and particularly, they have not only tampered with God seriously, as the Father, stripping Him of His sovereignty, stripping Him of His absolute authority, they've done some serious tampering with the person of Jesus Christ, reducing Him from the all-glorious One that He is, but particularly, they have decided to make a kind of golden calf out of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit in the Charismatic movement is completely unrecognizable when compared with the biblical teaching concerning this third member of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit that they talk about, that they have created, is a golden calf. Oh, it just happened, they just sort of threw themselves into the fires of human experience and look what Holy Spirit came out. And I would submit that no movement in the last 50 years has done more to damage the cause of the gospel, the cause of the kingdom, and the cause of biblical truth than the Charismatic movement. It's had far-reaching implications.

First of all, that movement, with its aberrant view of God, who is not sovereign, its aberrant view of the gospel, an Armenian view of the gospel, that man can pull himself up by his own bootstraps, and certainly an aberrant view of the Holy Spirit, that movement has demanded acceptance. It has demanded to be accepted in the mainstream of evangelicalism, and largely, evangelicalism has rolled over and said, “Come on, you can get in bed with us, we’re just all one in Christ.” It has demanded acceptance and with the acceptance of the Charismatic movement comes the Trojan Horse, and the Trojan Horse gets inside the city and the horse is opened and the troops are set loose and a myriad of things die. The church is then corrupted by a thousand different attacks, and its discernment is blunted, and its will to expose error is stilted.

And so what happens is the church literally becomes the haven for all kinds of error and all kinds of self-promoters whose brash egotism drives these errors. They have spilled over with that brash egotism into the mainstream church so that even people who aren’t part of that movement have picked up their self-promoting ways. It has given place to wild emotion-driven music that is called worship but may be the farthest thing from it, and much of it is offered to not the Holy Spirit genuinely but a golden calf misrepresentation. It has polluted the biblical doctrine of prayer seriously. I’m going to talk about that in a couple of Sunday nights, the corruption of the doctrine of prayer in this movement. It has corrupted the concept of faith, made faith some kind of creative power by which you can speak into existence whatever you want. It has given an opportunity for every imaginable and unimaginable form of unbiblical teaching to find its way into popularity, and at the same time, it continues to condemn the people who fight for biblical integrity.

In earlier generations, the Charismatic movement would have been labeled as heresy. Instead, they now set the rules for what is acceptable and dominate the media with their deviations. They claim – and this is the amazing part – to be the purest, most powerful, and truest form of Christianity, and they make sure that they get massive crowds so it appears that God is blessing them. And all who reject them, they say, are in danger of blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

Well, there’s the rub, isn’t it? They who blaspheme the Holy Spirit accuse us of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. They are doing what I said is the opposite of what the Pharisees did. They attributed the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan. These people attribute the work of Satan to the Holy Spirit. No group has done more to misrepresent the Holy Spirit than this movement in its public face, its media face for sure. And in the light of that, I just feel like I’m not here, as I said last week, to defend the Holy Spirit, He can take care of Himself very well, and judgment is certainly being pronounced as to when it will fall, one can only wait to see. But the incessant misrepresentation of supposed miracles by the Holy Spirit, supposed visions given by the Holy Spirit, people who see past things, past sins on a screen, prophecies from the Holy Spirit, trips to heaven, trips to hell, divine revelations in a myriad of forms, 3D dreams that are divine revelation. All of this all over the place in this movement and dribbling over the edges into the broader world of evangelicalism like some kind of a fountain. Very serious way to

treat the Holy Spirit, who is not a part of these things.

There's a word in the New Testament that I will call to your attention. Turn to Hebrews 10:29 before we get to Romans 8. In Hebrews 10:29, there is a word, and it's a word that you would not necessarily pull out of the text because it just looks at first kind of like a little addition at the end of a very important set of words. In verse 29 of Hebrews 10, it's very serious to read "How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who trampled underfoot the Son of God?" We get that far and we say, "Wow." That means there'll be degrees of punishment in hell – and I'm going to preach on hell as well in a few weeks. There will be degrees of punishment in hell. Hell will not be the same experience for everyone who is there. There will be severe degrees, and more severe degrees, and more severe degrees for those who are in hell. There will be degrees of punishment in hell.

The severest degree of punishment will be upon those who trampled underfoot the Son of God and regarded as unclean the blood of the Covenant. In other words, treated His sacrifice on the cross ratifying the New Covenant, providing salvation, treating it with disdain, trampling it, seeing it as unclean, that will bring about the hottest hell. That is to say that somebody living in some part of the world that never heard about Christ will perish and go to hell because without Christ, people go to hell, but that hell of that person will not be as severe a time of punishment as the one who heard the gospel, knew the gospel, understood the gospel, and rejected the gospel.

And we get that far in the verse and we say, "That is such a very frightening verse," but we don't often get to the end of it, which says, "and insulted the Spirit of grace." Here is an equally severe pronunciation of judgment on somebody who insults the Holy Spirit. In this immediate verse, it is obvious that it is an insult to the Holy Spirit to reject Christ and His sacrifice because, as I pointed out in Hebrews last week, He offered Himself by the Spirit. The Spirit was empowering through His whole life all that He did and said and was even there empowering Him, strengthening Him through His death. And the Spirit points to Christ after the cross, points to His death, points to His resurrection, points to Him as the only Savior. That's what Jesus said: "The Spirit will point to Me. He will direct you to Me. He will bring My words to your remembrance. He will glorify Me." So when you reject Christ, you commit an insult against the Holy Spirit. You're insulting the Holy Spirit by treating lightly and demeaning the fact that He is pointing to this glorious work of Christ.

That introduces the concept: What does it mean to insult the Spirit of grace? Keep in mind that He's called the Spirit of grace. The whole idea is that He wants to do something that is a gift of grace. You have insulted the Spirit of grace. The word here in the Greek is an interesting word, *enubriz* is how it sounds in Greek, *enubriz*. It has a root verb *hubriz*. You know that word – at least you've heard that word – because there's an English form of *hubriz* and it's the English word "hubris." Have you seen that word or read that word? It's not used often but it is a very good word. Hubris is an English word that means audacity. It means to be insolent. It means to treat with contempt, to have an attitude of animosity. In fact, the Greek verb – you can look in the lexicon, will tell you this, *hubriz* is to outrage,

to insult. The hottest hell is going to be for people who insulted the Holy Spirit. This is not *hubriz,* which means to outrage or to insult. This is *enubriz,* and whenever you put a preposition at the front of a Greek verb, you get an intensification of the word. That's how those prepositions function.

So *enubriz* is to violently insult – to violently insult. You don't want to violently insult the Holy Spirit, and yet anybody who rejects Jesus Christ, rejecting the knowledge of the gospel, and turning his or her back on Jesus Christ has committed a violent act of outrageous audacity and insolence against the Holy Spirit. No wonder hell will be hottest. You not only have committed an act of audacious insolence against the Father who said, "This is My beloved Son," but against the Son Himself by trampling underfoot the blood of the Covenant, but you've also been audaciously insolent and outrageously condemning to the very word of the Holy Spirit Himself. A violent insult. I don't think people understand that you just can't tread on the Trinity. This warning is very clear. For people who insult the Holy Spirit, there is a warning of severe judgment.

Now, I know that the context here is talking about those who insult the Holy Spirit by rejecting Christ. But any insult against the Holy Spirit constitutes a breach of what is appropriate response to the blessed, pure Holy Spirit. Such outrages occur against Him all the time. He is to be worshipped, He is to be honored, He is to be exalted, He is to be praised, He is to be thanked. He is to be glorified at all times, as is the Father, as is the Son equally, for all that He is and all that He does. He is yet the – on the one hand, the forgotten person in the Trinity by many and on the other hand, the abused person in the Trinity by many. So I think it's time for us to get the sense of what He does right. He is to be loved and honored by the people He serves. He is to be adored and worshipped as the one who gave us life and lives in us and sanctifies us and leads us and empowers us and enables us and seals us to eternal glory in the day that He, the Holy Spirit, raises us from the dead.

All of that is here in Romans 8, and I read it to you. This is an overview of His gracious and powerful help, the Spirit of grace. Who would ever insult – outrageously, audaciously insult the Holy Spirit? Only a fool.

Now let's go to Romans chapter 8 with those in our minds, those passages, one from the Old, one from the New. Romans chapter 8 starts with this great statement of confidence: "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." That sets the tone at the beginning of the chapter. We are in a no-condemnation status. If we're in Christ Jesus, we will never be condemned – never. That's how the chapter begins and also how it ends. If you go over to verse 34, it asks the final question, "Who is the one who condemns?" Well, it's not Christ and then it's not anything else, and it goes through the litany of things all the way down to the end where nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. So it begins by saying we're not under condemnation. It ends by raising all of the possible ways we could be condemned and eliminating every one of them. So it's a no-condemnation affirmation from verse 1 to verse 39.

This is one of those chapters that every believer ought to live in. You ought to live in this chapter. This is all glorious promise for no condemnation for those who are in Christ. This is your security here. This is where you need to live and rejoice that you are set for eternal glory. And how does it all happen? By the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Yes, yes, based upon the will of the Father. The Father chose. Yes, based upon the sacrifice of Christ, who provided the necessary substitution for our punishment, but also through the application of the Holy Spirit. The whole plan designed by the Father, ratified by the Son, and applied by the Spirit. I am what I am today in Christ because God chose me, Christ died for me, but I am what I am today in Christ because the Holy Spirit re-created me. This is the magnificence of this ministry of the Trinity.

So as we come into chapter 8 and we talk about what has happened in our salvation to put us into this no-condemnation status and to take us all the way to glory, we are going to be introduced to the fact that this is all being done by the Holy Spirit. And I'm going to take you through this chapter, and this is what you're going to learn: that the Holy Spirit frees us from death. We saw that last time, right? Verses 2 and 3, the Holy Spirit frees us from death – from sin and its consequence, death. Today we're going to learn that the Holy Spirit enables us to fulfill the law by changing our nature. The Holy Spirit frees us from sin and death, gives us life. The Holy Spirit enables us to fulfill the law by changing our nature here and now. Thirdly, the Holy Spirit will raise us one day to immortality. In the meantime, the Holy Spirit empowers us for victory over sin. The Holy Spirit confirms our adoption, guarantees our glory, and aids our prayers. And that is why we end up with a no-condemnation status – because of the work of the Holy Spirit.

You know, the odd irony is that the people who celebrate all of this crazy stuff that they attribute to the Holy Spirit largely deny this true work of the Holy Spirit. They don't necessarily believe that regeneration is a divine work; they think that there is in man enough prevenient grace that it all comes down to his willingness to believe, that it's not the work of the Holy Spirit, it's the faith of every individual. That's Armenian theology. They would also say that as fast as you could do something to gain that salvation, you could just as fast do something to lose it. You have no guarantee of glory. In fact, if you die with an unconfessed sin, you're probably going to go to hell. You are not actually in a no-condemnation status as an absolute and permanent fact. You are in a no-condemnation – only in a conditional sense. As you meet the conditions, you will stay in a no-condemnation status. As soon as you stop meeting the conditions, you will be condemned.

So the people who advocate all the wrong things about the Holy Spirit get the theology as wrong as they get the rest of it. They do not have any idea of what the Holy Spirit is doing in permanently and for good, freeing us from death and giving us everlasting life, enabling us to fulfill the law by permanently changing our nature, one day raising us to immortality. In the meantime, empowering us for victory, confirming our adoption as permanent, guaranteeing our eternal glory and, in the meantime, securing that glory by interceding for us always according to the Will of God, and as a

result of all that, securing our salvation everlastingly.

So if you're going to buy the Charismatic version of the Holy Spirit, you're not going to find Him in Romans 8. If you're going to come to Romans 8, you're going to get the true Holy Spirit; not the golden calf. This is the real work of the Holy Spirit.

Now, last time, we talked about the fact that He frees us from sin and death by giving us life – verses 2 and 3 – "For the law of the Spirit of life" – there, He's called the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus because "He sets you free from the law of sin and death." The word "law" here is not used in the moral code sense, or the legal sense, but as a principle, the principle or the reality or the dominating power. So it would read like this, "For the reality of the Spirit of life, or the power of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, to set you free from the power of sin and of death." You've been taken out of the realm of sin, which produces spiritual death and ultimately eternal death, and you've been given life by the Spirit of life.

How could He do that? The law couldn't do it, verse 3 says. The law couldn't do it because the flesh is too weak. You can't keep the law. So God did it. How did He do it? He sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as an offering for sin and condemned sin in the flesh. We said last time the law can condemn the sinner, the law condemns the sinner, that's its purpose, that's what it does, but it can't condemn sin. But God condemns sin in Christ. Christ came in the likeness of the sinful flesh, though not sinful, and was a sacrifice for us, the substitute, took our place, and because Christ took the penalty for all the sins of all who will believe, the Spirit then gives them life because the justice of God has been satisfied. This is the great doctrine of substitutionary atonement, the doctrine of imputed righteousness that's given to us on the basis of the work of Jesus Christ.

So God did, by the death of Christ, what the law couldn't do. The law can't save because the flesh is weak, can't keep the law. Romans 3: "By the deeds of the law, no flesh will be justified." But God did what the law couldn't do. The law could condemn the sinner, but Christ in His death condemned sin. The law kills the sinner, but God in Christ kills the power of sin. Amazing truth, and that is the work of the Holy Spirit.

You will live forever in heaven. You have been forgiven. You have been covered with the righteousness of Christ. You have gone from being dead to being alive, spiritually dead to being spiritually alive, eternally dead to being eternally alive, and that by the work of the Holy Spirit, decided by God, ratified by Christ, and applied by the Holy Spirit. You are a product of the Spirit's work. That's the first thing.

Now, there's a second aspect that I'm going to try to talk to you about a little bit, but there's a lot to say. Number two, here is what happens as a result: He enables us to fulfill God's law by giving us a new nature – He enables us to fulfill God's law by giving us a new nature. He changes us. Now, listen to this because it's really very foundational, very important truth. Verse 4: "So that" – this is

consequence. Because you're now alive, been given life, been justified, your sins paid for, death satisfied, justice satisfied, wrath satisfied, you are now alive by the Holy Spirit, you have been born again, given life, regenerated. That's possible because of the sacrifice of Christ. So as far as you're concerned, sin is condemned, you are not.

Now, what are the results? This is such a dramatic change, that's talking about imputed righteousness, but it's such a dramatic change and it is regeneration, that it has another component which we could call imparted righteousness. You don't want to mingle the two because they're different. But notice verse 4: "So that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us." Not in Christ. The requirement for the law was first fulfilled in Christ, and what did the law require? The wages of sin is what? Is death, so that requirement was fulfilled in Christ. He took our sin, died our death, paid our penalty, received our punishment.

But now, as a result, the requirement of the law can be fulfilled in us. This is because we aren't the same persons we used to be. It is not just a forensic thing, this salvation. It is not just a divine declaration. It is not just a change in your status. It doesn't just move you from one sort of divine box to another. It isn't only categorical, and that's what I mean by forensic or legal. It is also real, experiential. That's what conversion is.

Some years ago I did a series on being delivered, all the ways we are literally transferred, transformed. Now look what can happen. The righteousness of the law – that is, the righteousness of the law is nothing more than the righteousness of God, which is reflected in His law. Do you understand that? God's law is simply a reflection of His own righteous nature. Whatever is right or wrong as indicated in the revelation of His law is a reflection of the One who Himself is perfect holiness. How can that be? How can the righteousness of the law be fulfilled in us? Because before this miracle of life from the Holy Spirit, we couldn't fulfill the law. Romans 3 says none righteous, no not one, none that does good, none that seeks God, can't do anything right, your righteousness is filthy rags, Isaiah says. By the deeds of the law, no flesh can be justified. You cannot please God. You're alienated from the life of God. You're corrupt, you do what your father, the devil, does. His desires and lusts you follow. How in the world can we now all of a sudden do the things that are in the law?

That's the second great work of the Holy Spirit – that's the second great work of the Holy Spirit. You not only have been forensically separated from the consequence of sin, but you have been actually separated from the power of sin. This is sanctification. Something real happened. You had a death. Go back to Romans 6, right? You died with Christ. And you rose to walk in what? Same old life? No, newness of life. You rose to walk with a new life. You've been born again. You're not the same. You're a new creation. Second Corinthians tells us, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation" – chapter 5 verse 17. So you're new and here's how your newness is defined – listen to this – back to verse 4. How is it that you can now fulfill the requirement of the law? "Because you do not walk

according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." You have an entirely new resident power. You're a new creation, and you now are the temple of the Spirit of God. It's a combination of a new person, you, and a new person, the Holy Spirit, being in you.

Please, folks, that's a fact, that statement at the end of verse 4. It's a fact, notice it, it's not a command, it's not a request, it's a fact. You do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. When you're a Christian, you're different. I've been trying to get this across for 40 years. Don't tell me you're a Christian if you're not different, don't tell me you're a Christian if you're walking according to the flesh. Don't tell me you're a Christian if your life looks like all the other people who are not Christians, with the exception that you show up at church once in a while.

This is not a responsibility here. Oh, we'll get to that when we get to verses 12 and 13 because there will be a responsibility, just like with salvation. That's an act of God but not apart from our faith. Sanctification is a work of the Sprit but not apart from our obedience. The Bible is written by the Holy Spirit but not apart from the writer's willingness. You're secure to heaven but not apart from your perseverance. That always comes in, doesn't it? There's always that human-responsibility side to every one of those great truths. But for now, what the Word is saying is, "You do not walk after the flesh anymore, you walk after the Spirit." Walk is the most ancient expression to describe daily direction, daily conduct, one's disposition, one's bent. It's a fact – it's a fact.

In fact, verse 5 expands the fact. "Those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh. Those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." So here's – here's an expansion. You walk according to the Spirit because your mind is set according to the Spirit. You think differently and so you act differently. That's not, again, a request, not a command, that's a fact. It's like Ephesians 2:10, that you have been saved by grace through faith, that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not of works that any man should boast, but unto good works which God has before ordained that you should walk in them. The inevitability is your life will change and your direction will change, your disposition will change, your bent will change, your behavior will change, your affections will change, everything will change – everything.

This is such a critical verse. I don't know how we could even come up with anything more helpful to understand the foundation realities of who we are in Christ than to get this right. We're not talking here about personal virtue, some kind of isolated thing that you hope a believer is going to kind of have show up in his life. We're saying this is how you will live if you're a believer. This is how you will live. And in all honesty, this is why a true penitent, a true believer, comes to Christ to start with. There are two things going on there. What do you want when you came to Christ? What are you looking for? Well, one, you wanted to be rescued from eternal hell. Is that fair? Two, you wanted to be delivered from your sin. It's a beatitude attitude. The people who were in the kingdom hungered and thirsted after righteousness, and they mourned over their sin, and they were distraught over their wretchedness.

Look, if the preacher says God wants you to be happy, then multitudes of the people who want to be happy will flock to Jesus. “Jesus, make me happy.” If the preacher says if you’re sick, you’ve got a marriage problem, financial frustration, or loneliness, “Look to Jesus, who will satisfy the desires of your heart.” Then all the people who are lonely and have bad marriages and don’t want to be lonely will come running to Jesus. Each conceives of the ultimate joy as personal satisfaction, right? The ultimate joy would be to be well. Or the ultimate joy would be to be happy. Or the ultimate joy would be to be married to the perfect man. Or the ultimate joy would be to have that house that I want so much. The ultimate joy would be to get a promotion. Well, if that’s what you offer people in the name of Jesus, you’ll fill up a Houston stadium and they’ll all come running in. They’ll sing all the songs and they’ll run to Jesus, and Jesus, they hope, will give them all the things that’ll make them happy.

People who are saved aren’t looking for happy, they’re looking for holy. That’s what they’re looking for. Big difference – big difference. They’re looking for holy. They want to escape the power and the penalty of their sin. That’s why Hebrews 12:14 says, “Follow holiness, without which no man will see the Lord.” You don’t get there coming the path of happy; you get there coming in the path of holy. Until people are compelled by their sin to seek a Savior and pursue righteousness, they don’t come to Christ truly, truly. Christ met the penalty of the law of God for us so that we could keep the law of God by the power of the Holy Spirit in us. Christ met the penalty for us; the Spirit fulfills the law in us.

When the sinner leaves the court of God, the court of God’s pure justice, with a pardon for sin, he’s not finished with the law. He’s not finished with the law. Not at all. The moral law of God runs right through the heart of the kingdom. It runs right through the heart of every true Christian. The moral law of God is nowhere – listen – more at home than in the middle of the kingdom of grace because God’s law is a reflection of Him and his Will. The moral law can’t make us holy, but God can enable us by regeneration in the presence of the Holy Spirit to progressively become holy and to fulfill the law. This is a fact. If you’re a believer, you are in the process of this progressive sanctification.

What aids that? What enables that? Exposure to truth, right? Second Corinthians 3:18: “As you gaze at the glory of the Lord” – where do you see that? Where do you look and find the glory of God? Where is it revealed? Scripture. The more you gaze at that, the more you’re changed into His image from one level of glory to the next, to the next, to the next, by the Holy Spirit. What tool does the Holy Spirit use to sanctify you? The Word. As you gaze at the Word and you see the majesty and glory of Christ and God and the Holy Spirit in the Word, the glory that’s revealed there, you literally are shaped into that image from one level of glory to another, ascending, ascending. That’s progressive sanctification and that’s the work of the Holy Spirit.

And what does it mean to be sanctified and separate from sin? It means to become obedient to the law of God, obedient to the will of God, to do what pleases God and He’s revealed what pleases Him. Listen, law obedience is not – cannot be the ground of our justification, but it is the fruit of our

justification. And it is the evidence of our sanctification. Those who are justified are also sanctified under the influence of the Holy Spirit by whose power we now live and we can fulfill the divine law, and it's not burdensome. What did David say? "Oh, how I love Your law. Your law is my delight," Psalm 119, over and over, 175 times, and then a final verse on his own admitted wretchedness. We love the law. It's our bent. It's our desire. It's our hunger. It's what we want.

You can think of it this way, sort of in the big-picture sense: God's loving commands, which are right and true and holy and good, He revealed to Adam for the sake of Adam's fellowship and joy in the Garden. You understand that Adam didn't know anything intuitively. You don't find God intuitively. That's why God walked and talked with Him in the cool of the day every evening. What was that about? I'll tell you what, it wasn't Adam telling God anything. It was divine revelation. It was God unloading the agenda on Adam. Adam knew that when he woke up that morning and there was a creature there the likes of which he had never seen, he was supposed to take her as a wife because God told him. Adam knew what his responsibility in the Garden was because God told him. Adam knew what he wasn't supposed to do because God told him. Adam knew what he knew because God told him. God was always the source of truth. God gave Adam behaviors that were reflection of the Will of God and what would please God.

So we would say this, that God's loving commands, which He gave to Adam, were for the purpose of Adam's joy as he obeyed them, right? Then the fall, then what happened? The rules don't change. The law's the same but now it's negative, it's restrictive, it's prohibitive, and it doesn't produce fellowship with God, it produces separation from God. Everything's gone bad. It doesn't bring about joy, it brings about sorrow. It doesn't have a future anticipation of continued blessing, it has a future anticipation of damnation. Same law, same God revealing the same things in Eden produces love, fellowship, joy, hope, blessing. Same law after the fall, negative, prohibitive, restrictive, separates the soul from God, condemns man, makes him guilty, without peace, without hope, headed for judgment.

Then comes the gospel. Same commands, exact same commands that God gave in the Old Testament, consistent with His nature, that damned us and condemned us now become the very things that we long to do because they define our fellowship with God, our joy with Him, don't they? "These things I write unto you," John said, "that your joy may be full." "Happy is the man who hears My Word and keeps it." If you want a relationship with God, if you want joy in that relationship, blessing in that relationship, hope in that relationship, then you do the things that please Him. And the things that please Him and honor Him are the things that He has revealed as right and good and holy. Before you couldn't do that, so it was all condemnation. Now, you have been given life, you are a new creation. You have a capacity now to do what you could never do in the past. Not only do you have a capacity to do it because you're a new creation, but you have an attending, divine helper: the Holy Spirit.

It was Augustine who said, “Grace was given that the law might be fulfilled.” And it can be fulfilled because the Holy Spirit has changed our nature and taken up residence in us. I don’t want to overstate this, but do you understand that’s a very personal ministry? Very, very personal ministry to every single one of us? Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit – not just the church collectively but you as an individual. The Spirit is there aiding and helping that new creation to fulfill the law of God. That’s your bent, that’s your disposition, that’s what you love, that’s what you want if you have been born again. The comfort which comes to us from the Holy Spirit is connected to our obedience. The assurance which comes to us from the Holy Spirit is connected to our obedience. Joy is connected to our obedience. Absence of fear and anxiety and doubt is connected to our obedience. And we have the capacity because we have been made new and we have the resident Holy Spirit empowering us. What an amazing gift.

Now let’s go back for just a moment to verse 5. There are only two kinds of people in the world – and we’ll get in to verse 5 next time more – those who are according to the flesh, and they set their minds on the things of the flesh, and those who are according to the Spirit, who set their mind on the things of the Spirit. And, of course, the mind set on the flesh is death and the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.

This might simplify your world for you a little bit. I want to give you a worldview helper here. Two kinds of people in the world, my grandpa used to say, the saints and the ain’ts. That may be sort of a little oversimplification, but there are only two kinds of people in the world. The two kinds of people in the world are those who function according to the flesh and those who function according to the Spirit. The people who function according to the flesh, who do what the flesh tells them to do – the lust with the eyes, the pride of life, the lust of the flesh – those are things in the world, 1 John tells us. They’re the people who follow that, who follow their father, the devil. They’re liars like him and they’re killers like him, at heart if not actually. They follow his lusts. That’s one kind of people, the people who operate according to the flesh.

There, then, are the only other kind of people in the world: those who operate according to the Spirit. Listen to this: God never divides people by race – never. God never divides people by sex. He does divide them by sexual preference because that’s sin, but He never divides people by culture, education, race, sex, economic status, social status – none of that. All people are divided into two categories, those who live according to the flesh and those who live according to the Spirit. Those who mind the things of the flesh, those who mind the things of the Spirit. Those who walk according to the flesh, those who walk according to the Spirit. Christians are the people who function in the Spirit, they live in the Spirit, they think in the Spirit, they walk in the Spirit. That’s it. That’s the only difference God recognizes. In Christ, there’s neither Jew, Gentile, Greek, male, female, bond, free. That’s what I love about our church. We don’t make any distinctions here except this one.

David Brown, many years ago, wrote: “Men must be under the predominating influence of one or the other of these two principles. And according as the one or the other has the mastery will be the complexion of their life and the character of their actions.” And then Hodge, the great theologian, said: “The bent of the thoughts, affections, and pursuits is the only decisive test of character.” The bent of the thoughts, affections, and pursuits. What do you think? What do you want? How do you walk?

And as I said, you can just take another look at verse 5 – and we’ll look at this more. You can see there in verse 5 the word mind, set their minds, and then you see it again in verse 6, mind, and then you see it again in verse 7, mind, twice in verse 6. Mind, mind, mind, mind – what produces walk, walk, walk, walk is mind, mind, mind, mind. Walk, that’s behavior. Mind, that’s thinking. According to, that’s nature. So if you walk according to the flesh, that’s your unconverted, unregenerate nature, and you think fleshly things, and you do fleshly things; however, if you are according to the Spirit as to your nature, you think the things of the Spirit and you walk in the ways of the Spirit. That’s marvelous clarity there in the flow of Paul’s thought. So here we are, wanting with all our hearts, desiring, longing to fulfill the law of God because we have desires coming up out of us that we didn’t have before we were converted, and they’re placed there by the transformation of our nature and by the ever-resident Holy Spirit. What a gift – what a gift.

Let’s treat the Holy Spirit the way He deserves to be treated. Let’s honor Him for what He’s truly doing and not assign to Him all kinds of horrible things that He would never ever accept. Let us never be guilty of insulting Him. More next time.

Father, we thank You again this morning. Your Word is a light to us and life. How rich we are because of the truth that we have brought before us week after week. Just amazing, glorious truth, and our hearts hunger for it, embrace it, love it. When we chew on it and meditate on it, it brings us joy. It directs us. It produces in us praise and worship and song. Thank You for all of this. Thank You, O Holy Spirit, for Your work. Be honored in this generation. Be honored, be exalted, be lifted up. You’re worthy. Amen.

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