

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 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, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Text: Romans 8:1-11 A 6/18/17 Proverbs 11:23-31 Matthew 19:16-26 Psalm 51 Resp. Ps. 139
Hymns: 373 (1, 2, 5, 7), 234, 398, 175

THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES US A NEW LIFE IN CHRIST!

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

In the chapter before our text the Apostle Paul says, *“I do not understand what I am doing. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ... I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”* (Ro. 7:15, 18-19, 24, NIV). Paul’s maddening frustration is painfully familiar to us all in our own battles against our sinful nature. There are times when we, too, feel so discouraged and helpless, and so unworthy of God’s forgiveness and love and help.

Because we have our sinful flesh – our sinful nature – we sin every day. The harder we try to do what’s right, the more aware we are of how much we sin. The hymnwriter expresses it well: *“And they who fain would serve Thee best are conscious most of wrong within”* (TLH #557:6). We look at ourselves and we see how far short we are from where we should be.

Praise God, *“There is therefore now **no** condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”!* God can and God does forgive us and love us because we *“**are in Christ Jesus**”!* We believe in Jesus. Jesus died for every one of our sins on the cross. We are covered by Jesus’ righteousness, so God doesn’t look at our sins and punish us as we deserve. Instead, God looks at His Son’s righteousness covering us, and declares us guilty sinners to be righteous in His sight. God the Holy Spirit is in us. That’s why we’re troubled when we sin. If we were not *“in Christ,”* and the Holy Spirit were not in us, we wouldn’t care about our sins. Being *“in Christ,”* and having the Holy Spirit in us – that’s why we do the fighting against sin that we do. That’s why we repent

when we sin, and that's why we do the good works that we do. The credit is not ours. All credit belongs to Jesus and the Holy Spirit!

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." By nature we're controlled by *"the law of sin and death,"* which would make us slaves to sin and bring us eternal death in hell. But the Holy Spirit gave us our faith in Jesus. We sin, but sin doesn't control our lives. Jesus does! The Holy Spirit has made us dead to a life of sin, and alive to living for Christ. The Holy Spirit has made us spiritually alive, and given us eternal life, in Christ!

Our text refers to *"what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh."* If we could perfectly obey God's Law – if we could perfectly obey everything God tells us to do in the Bible – we would deserve to go to heaven. But, we're told, *"the law ...could not"* save us (from the original text: it is *"impossible"* for the Law to save us). The Law can't save us because we're sinful. We can't obey the Law perfectly and earn our way to heaven. Galatians 2:16 says, *"A man is **not** justified by the works of the Law, ... by the works of the Law shall **no** flesh be justified."*

"For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh." Since we can't save ourselves, God sent Jesus to save us. We're told that Jesus came to earth *"in the likeness of sinful flesh."* Jesus became human. But because He's also God, Jesus isn't sinful like us. Hebrews 4:15 says that Jesus is *"without sin."* By **Jesus'** perfect life He fulfilled all of the Law's demands – everything God commands us to do in the Bible – in our place. **Jesus** earned heaven for us.

Because of our sins we don't deserve God's forgiveness and love. We deserve to be punished forever in hell. But the Bible says, *"[God] made [Christ], who knew no sin, to be sin for us"* (2 Cor. 5:21). God took every one of our sins away from us, and put them all on Jesus. Jesus was willing to be punished on the cross for our sins in our place, so that we don't have to be punished. We're told that in Jesus God has *"condemned sin in the flesh."* In Jesus, God has forgiven our sins, and broken sin's power to make us its slave and bring God's judgment on us!

God sent Jesus *"that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us."* The idea from the original is that there's **nothing** left for us to do to save ourselves. Jesus did **everything** that had to be done to save us! He has given us His Word on it: *"It is **finished!**"* (Jn.19:30).

If I say "Jesus did it all for me" as an excuse for sinning, something is **terribly** wrong with my faith and my relationship with God. The Bible says that *"we love [God] because He first loved us"* (1 Jn. 4:19); and that *"the love of Christ controls us"* (2 Cor. 5:14). Knowing our sinfulness before God and God's forgiveness and love for us in Jesus moves us to love God in return. Jesus' love working in us and the power of the Holy Spirit working in us move us and enable us *"not [to] walk according to the flesh but according to the [Holy] Spirit."*

"Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the [Holy] Spirit, the things of the [Holy] Spirit." We who believe in Jesus have very different values and priorities and views on right and wrong from those who don't

believe in Jesus. We're told that the unbelievers "*set their minds on the things of the flesh,*" and we believers "*set [our] minds on the things of the [Holy] Spirit.*"

The Holy Spirit leads us to fight against living according to the ways of the world and our flesh, which would end us up in hell. Led by the Holy Spirit, our hearts and our lives are **controlled** by the Holy Spirit, who is leading us to eternal life in heaven. "*To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the [Holy] Spirit is life and peace*" with God, and with ourselves.

"*The carnal*" ("fleshly," "human") "*mind is enmity against God.*" The human mind hates God. "*For it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.*" (The original points out that this is an on-going condition everyone has by nature.) People by nature aren't neutral toward God. We Christians can't expect that because we try to reason with unbelievers they'll give up their sinful ways and follow God's way instead. People by nature have an outlook on life that's opposed to God. Our human reason tells us that God's Law – what God says about right and wrong – is outdated, too strict, and just plain wrong itself. No one can understand God and what He says in the Bible by using human reason.

"*Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*" Hebrews 11:6 says, "*Without faith it is impossible to please God.*" Those who live a life apart from God and Jesus – who follow their own philosophy for life, who don't ask God to forgive their sins, who don't place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ for their salvation – cannot please God.

"*You*" (from the original text, "**You yourselves**") (in stark contrast to the unbelievers "*who are in the flesh*") "*are not in the flesh but in the [Holy] Spirit.*" Because we'll have our sinful flesh until we die, we sin. But by God's grace we're not controlled by our sinful nature, living a life of defiance of God and unrepentance. Instead we're controlled by the Holy Spirit. The Bible says, "*No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit*" (1 Cor. 12:3). The Holy Spirit gave us our faith in Jesus. The Bible says, "*Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body*" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). The Holy Spirit is living in us, moving us and empowering us to live for Christ!

"*The body is dead because of sin.*" Because we're sinful, we can't make ourselves stop sinning, and we can't make ourselves live the way God tells us to. But we're told since "*Christ is in you*" (the original emphasizing that Jesus is to **remain** in us by an on-going faith relationship with Him); "*the body is dead because of sin, but the [Holy] Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you*" (and He does!), "*He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His [Holy] Spirit who dwells in you.*" The Holy Spirit enables us to say, "No!" to sin, and, "Yes!" to Jesus.

When Paul said, "*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*" he knew where to turn: "*Thanks be to God – through our Lord Jesus Christ!*" (Ro. 7:24-25). Never give up hope because of your sinfulness. "*There is therefore now **no** condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.... For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.*" Because of Jesus we are **not** slaves to sin and death. Jesus' perfect life covers our sinfulness, so we sinners are righteous in God's sight. Jesus' death on the cross has taken **every** one of our sins away. The Holy Spirit is living in us. He strengthens us to resist sin and live for Christ. **THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES US A NEW LIFE IN CHRIST! Amen.**