

Fourth Sunday in Lent
March 29, 2017
Romans 8:1-10
Freedom in Christ Endows the Spirit's Mindset
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Dear friends in Christ,

We Christians are determined to share the gospel with others. Some call that a "mission mindset." The apostle Paul describes an additional mindset in the believer in Christ. This is my determination to follow what the Holy Spirit desires in me, rather than what my sinful nature wants. In other words, our thoughts and the Holy Spirit's thoughts are on the same page.

Our common way of thinking with the Spirit originates in our freedom in Christ. This is the freedom from our sins being a judgment against us which is what the word "condemnation" means as Paul used it here. Psalm 146:7 declares, "The LORD sets prisoners free." Verse 8 connects this thought to last week's message, "the LORD gives sight to the blind."

We may summarize the apostle's point with our theme, **Freedom in Christ Endows the Spirit's Mindset.** There is no condemnation for believers. The Holy Spirit sets our minds on what he desires.

When a judge hears evidence of guilt, the judge pronounces judgment against the accused. The defendant stands before the bench guilty of choosing to do his own thing rather than choosing to obey the law. Sounds very much like us before God, according to Isaiah, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way." [53:6]

Wouldn't any guilty person appreciate someone who stepped up and said, "Condemn me instead? Declare me guilty in the convicted person's place. Having done that, declare them not guilty since you have accepted me as their Substitute." This is the judgment the Father brought against his Son, Jesus Christ, on the cross. Or, as Isaiah, continued in chapter 53, "The LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." As a result, therefore, this is the judgment Jesus' resurrection confirms, "Therefore, there is no condemnation (no judgment against) for those who are in Christ Jesus."

We are free "in Christ Jesus" now rather than still under the "law of sin and death." Under that law we were powerless to meet the righteous requirement of perfection because of our sinful flesh. Jesus did two things for us. Jesus kept those requirements holy. In Christ, those requirements "might be fully met in us." In our likeness as sinners, Jesus offered himself for sin, as an offering to pay for sin.

The Holy Spirit has set us free by giving us those acts our Savior carried out to redeem us in new spiritual life, faith. Another way the apostle describes us in our freedom is this, "who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." The Father has condemned sin in our flesh so that we are free from the law of sin and death. This gives us the Spirit's mindset rather than "the mind governed by the flesh." The Holy Spirit sets our minds on what he desires.

The word "conversion" means to "have a change of mind." We still retain our sinful thoughts but as Christians we do not embrace them as our way of life. We do not have our minds set on them, i.e. seek ways to fulfill them, or satisfy them. We recognize that our evil thoughts do not want to submit to God's will. In fact, they can't. That mind governed by the flesh cannot please God and leads only to death.

The Spirit's mindset seeks God's will. This mindset leads us to seek ways that please God as a child desires to please his father as a way of showing love and gratitude for blessings received.

Thinking like the Holy Spirit instead of thinking as if our minds still were governed by the flesh “is life and peace.”

There are some who have compared being “in Christ Jesus” with mind control. In a sense it is. It is not mind control by another human being as in a cult. It is having a mind the Holy Spirit controls through the Word. The good news of Jesus obedience and sacrifice sets us free as the Spirit gives us new life. The law that no longer condemns us does guide us in our sanctification, our godly lives of love and gratitude.

What do the thoughts look like for those who have the Spirit of Christ and thus belong to Christ? What is our mindset “in the realm of the Spirit” rather than “in the realm of the flesh?” The Spirit and we desire to set aside our petty gripes and thin skin. We desire humble service rather than a place of honor as we heard in our gospel. The Holy Spirit and I have our mind on being close to God’s Word and giving it high priority as the only norm and rule of faith. We want to be faithful to our families and not spend an unbalanced amount of time at work or on the computer. You can make your personal list, I’m sure.

The apostle summarized the Spirit’s mindset well to the Philippians,, 4:8, “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable- if anything is excellent, or praiseworthy-think about such things.”

Yes, Paul, wrote, our bodies still are subject to death. But our spirits are alive through Christ’s righteousness. In that life of faith, when I have thoughts about a thing God directs according to the Word, I say, “Lord, that is just what I was thinking. We are on the same page.” Amen.

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