

The 10th Sunday after Pentecost ~ Sunday, August 6, 2023

“Life in the Spirit: Debtors & Executioners”

Romans 8:12-13

Those in the flesh are _____, while those in the Spirit are _____ and at peace. The vital, urgent need of every human heart then, is for the Spirit of Christ to give us new _____.

“So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”

(Romans 8:12-13)

TWO CENTRAL METAPHORS

Metaphor #1: We are _____.

We are under a binding and ongoing _____. Just like a person whose financial debts have been called in and now they have no choice but to repay, Christians likewise are bound by a kind of spiritual _____.

Paul is _____ about what the debt is not, and _____ about what that debt really is.

“the flesh” = Paul’s theological shorthand for our _____ human nature enslaved to, and governed by, sin and rebellion against God before we were in Christ.

This is our _____ nature, our real condition or _____ before God because of our _____ of the finished work of Jesus on the cross on our behalf.

It’s crucial that we understand this, if we’re to trust in Christ today and abide in Him instead of _____ into our old nature, as Paul warns in many of his epistles.

No matter how _____ we may feel at times—no matter how hard the battle—Paul is clear here that this is our real _____ now that we’re in Christ. The flesh no longer _____. It no longer provides the governing context for our lives. We’re no longer according to the flesh; we no longer live in the flesh, in the realm and under the regime of the flesh.

A _____ and irreversible change has taken place—we’re under new

management, as it were. We’ve been granted _____ in a new country and brought under the rule of a new king.

It’s all lies and _____. Those of us who are in Christ, don’t _____ the flesh any allegiance. We have no debt to the flesh to pay off. It has no claim on us and no rights over us. We’re no longer “in the flesh,” and we’re free from all obligation to the old life, and so we can stop living as if we did.

It’s not enough to be free of the mastery of sin. Our resistance to the flesh would always fail entirely were we left to our own _____ to fight it.

When we became Christians, not only was the mastery and the dominion of the flesh _____, but the Spirit has come to _____ over our hearts. He’s come to dwell within us and begun a mighty regenerating and renovating work in our hearts. e’ve been born again, and are now, indeed under _____—debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh, but to the Spirit, who’s come to rule in our hearts, and to live according to the Spirit, and by the power of the Holy Spirit

Metaphor #2: We are _____.

J.I. Packer who writes; “The mark of authentic Christianity is not a conversion experience so much as it is present _____.”

We shouldn’t put too much weight on dramatic religious/spiritual/conversion experiences in our past, but to put the focus where Paul puts it, on whether we’re _____ the Gospel and _____ in Jesus alone for salvation today; whether we’re living for Christ by His grace _____ us, learning to love what He loves and hate what He hates today.

Past experiences are not a safe basis for present _____ before God.

Live free or die! According to Paul, this is not only a _____ for the Christian life, but the spiritual _____ of our heart.

What matters isn’t a dramatic conversion experience in the past, but present convertedness—that today, right now, we are _____, a child of God, trusting in Jesus and His finished work on the cross on our behalf, living, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

It means by the Spirit, putting to _____ the deeds done in the body, that we might live. In other words, the path to life forever, Paul’s saying, is walked by those who _____ sin.

Paul isn't talking about a _____ action, like there's some sort of spiritual silver bullet we can fire at the flesh in order to be free from its interference. This isn't a once for all action, but something we must do, and continue to do every day, until our time on this earth is done and we go to be with Jesus. _____ we must play the role of executioner and be killing sin and putting to death the deeds done in the body

Sin loves to put up a fight and it typically dies very _____. And so, the flesh and the deeds done in the body, will only die under the _____ application of the executioner's trade. Diligently and _____ put to death the deeds done in the body. Don't ever stop. Cut it out at the _____.

We shouldn't fall into the trap that some have fallen into, and believe that even Christians are _____ to do anything about their sin. We're no longer in the condition that Paul describes in verse 8—before we were saved—when we were totally unable to _____ God.

We can only do this by the Spirit. This is the dynamic at work in the Christian life. Yes, we're dead to sin and alive to _____, and are able more and more to say "No" to sin and "Yes" to God. However, at every step of the way, our growing _____ is enabled and empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit, who has given us new life; and on whom we must now learn to rely on, as we set about this painful work of what John Owen called "the _____ of sin.

4 PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO KILL SIN BY THE SPIRIT

#1. Understand that it's a matter of the heart.

Sin is about more than just our behaviour and the things we do, just as mortifying sin and putting it to death is about more than just stopping one behavior and starting another. It's about the heart. Although the flesh is no longer our master, it still seeks to build a stronghold in our heart—our fears, longings, desires, appetites, habits, and addictions. The battle that we're to be engaged in involves searching and dealing with our heart first—with our deepest motivations and desires. In Romans 8:27 Paul speaks about "God who searches the heart knowing the mind of the Spirit." In other words, the Spirit is deeply involved in the hard heart-work of rooting out sin at the most basic layers of our lives. If we try to keep things at the superficial level of outward behavioural change only, we'll never make any real progress in killing sin.

#2. Pray for the Holy Spirit's power and help.

We need to do this because we're powerless to do this work in our own strength.

The Spirit helps us, in many ways, quietly, subtly, sustaining and strengthening us, often unnoticed and without our ever asking for His help. However, we shouldn't presume upon those often unasked for, quiet, works that the Spirit is pleased to perform. We need to cling consciously to Him and plead for His help. As Paul prays earlier in Ephesians 1:17 that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ." And in Ephesians 3:16, he prays that we "may be strengthened with power through the Spirit."

#3. Get into the Word.

The Bible is the sword of the Spirit, and we can't hope to slay sin unless we wield that sword often and diligently. The Holy Spirit makes the words of the Bible sharp and piercing in our hearts. As we read in Hebrews 4:12; "The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." If our Bible sits closed all week long until next Sunday, there's no wonder that our sin is strong and the flesh is mighty in our lives, and not easily killed.

#4. Turn your eyes to Jesus and rest wholly on him.

When Paul prayed for God to give the Holy Spirit to the Ephesians, he prayed that they might be granted power by the Spirit to grasp the wonder of the love of Christ that surpasses understanding. When he prayed that the spirit of wisdom and revelation might be given, it was wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. The Spirit's great ministry is to take us to Christ, to His cross, to His throne. It's to remind us of Him, call us back to Him, teach us to love Him, and to rest all our weight on Him. Jesus is the one who is full of the Spirit without measure. And if we're to take hold of the Spirit, and by the Spirit kill the deeds of the body, it will only be because we've received the Spirit from the nail-pierced hands of our Saviour. We need to get ourselves to Jesus. And there, in His presence, sin cannot hope to triumph—it withers and dies.