“Law, Spirit, Life”

August 19, 2018

Romans 8:30-39

Please find with me the eighth chapter of Romans. Please follow with me at verse two. How many of you like laws? GTFR How many of you voted this past week? Did you know that every time you vote someone into office, you are asking them to do the one thing none of us likes done; create new laws.

You might be shocked to learn that no one in the entire United States knows how many laws we have in this country. Think about it like this. The U.S. Congress exists, in part, to remove any outdated laws *and* to create new ones. The average number of new laws Congress makes every year is 125. And you’ve heard the phrase “do nothing” congress, right? That means that, for that particular year, congress didn’t pass any laws.

Now, if you go to the Congressional Law Library you will not be able to find out how many laws there are. No one knows how many laws we have in our United States. And there are easily a million laws on the books.

Then you’ve got State Laws and city laws and county laws. In CT our General Statutes consists of 13 volumes of General Statues and 82 categories of laws which are listed under 55 titles. To say the least, we are a nation of an unknown list of laws. And when any laws pertaining to you and me are broken, we face a penalty. And yet we all know that laws are definitely important and they are necessary.

And, practically speaking, everyone here really likes laws. We only say we don’t like them. How do I know this? Here’s the proof: habits. Habits are really personal laws you have chosen to live your life under inside your own personal kingdom where you reign as king.

So, today, laws. Look with me at this second verse of Romans eight.

Romans 8:2 *“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”*

The Bible, as you know, is the final court of appeal when it comes to any subject. Clearly these words are among the most blessed words in all of the Bible “Law, Spirit, Life.” Shall we pray?

Now we know Paul, according to his own words, was the least of all the Apostles of Jesus. But, I’m of the opinion that the Apostle Paul was the greatest lawyer in history. What else could you conclude after reading about the law in Romans and seeing his understanding of the law? Besides, prior to becoming a Christian, he’d studied under the greatest lawyer of his day, the great Gamaliel.

And Romans is the only Book in existence that tells you and explains for you the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about “Law.” And there are just 78 references in the Book of Romans to “law.” 57 of those refer to the Law of Moses.

So, in order to apply Romans 8:2 to your life, you’ll need to know about three laws. They are as follows: the Law of Moses, the law of sin and death and the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus.

You’ve got “the Law,” which is a reference to the Law of Moses. Paul refers to the Law of Moses 57 times. Then there’s the law of sin and death (which is inside the members of my body) and the law of the Spirt of Life in Christ Jesus. Please follow with me at the first verse of this chapter.

Romans 8:1 *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (2) For* ***the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*** *hath made me free from* ***the law of sin and death****.*

*(3) For what* ***the law*** *could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (4) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”*

Now, after all we’ve studied about the condemnation of the law in the first seven chapters of Romans, you would think that Paul would remove law from his thinking. But he does the exact opposite. He introduces another law, the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus.

Paul explains. This new law, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. Why? Because another law, the Mosaic Law couldn’t help you with the law of sin and death. And why is that? Because inside the members of your body lives the law of sin and death. Here’s how Paul put it. Romans 7:18 *“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. (19) For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. (20) Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. (21)* ***I find then a law****, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.”*

Now, can you see why it’s so important to see this? Because you have this law of sin and death residing in your members, you need a stronger law to overcome it. This new law, the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus is the most important law in the world. Let me show you what I mean.

First, a new law succeeds where an old one fails. Haven’t you noticed that in the plan of God, He always makes a way for us?

 One law was very strong. The law of sin and death is very present and very powerful in every one of us. And one law is stronger, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. One might be compared to the law of gravity and the other to the law of aerodynamics.

Let me show you what I mean. Gravity says a Boeing 747 weighing 365 tons cannot fly. But it does. Why? Because another law, the law of aerodynamics combines speed and thrust and lift to completely overcome the law of gravity. When it does, it can speed through the air carrying 1,000 people from New York to Rome at a speed of 600 mph. Most of us have absolutely no idea how this can happen. But it happens 4,000 times every day. You see the law of gravity is just that, a law. It operates the exact same way every single day. Drop a penny off the Empire State Building, it will always fall to the street below. But the law of aerodynamics is just as much a law. And it operates the exact same way every single day.

Let’s make you the Captain of your own Boeing 747 today. You can do nothing to move that jet by your own effort; absolutely nothing. But there is something that can be done to overcome the law of gravity that hinders you from moving that jet. What is it? The law of aerodynamics. With that law you can carry 1,000 people on your 747. You can get that jet to Rome. But you need that second law.

Here’s what I mean.

You – you have the law of sin and death in operation upon you constantly.

The Law of Moses. You can’t possibly keep God’s righteous laws. It’s impossible. Some, yes. But the whole law? Why? Because the law of sin and death dwelling within your members hinders you.

But, then there’s the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus. The only way to get you into the air, spiritually speaking, to get you flying right is to apply this amazing law.

Let me give you an example. What happens when some-one says or does something unkind to inconsiderate to you? What happens when they are mean to you? You’ve had it happen before you came to the LORD. So, now as a Chris-tian, you experience it again. And the temptation to get angry and to retaliate rises up in you. And how did you respond before you came to the LORD? You got angry. You said and did things that you are now ashamed of. But now, as a Christian, how will you live? How do you respond?

Immediately, you remind yourself that God has done something about your sins and your sin. And you know that the Spirit of Christ now lives in you. So, instead of operating by the law of sin and death, you turn your heart to the LORD. You surrender your own ability to His ability and ask *Him* to respond to them through you.

You see, these laws operate in this world just like you, gravity and aerodynamics. And what does the LORD say? He says the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus is the only thing that can set you free from the law of sin and death. The law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus is far stronger than the law of sin and death. And it’s a law. It happens the exact same way every time.

Folks, God is the God of Replacement. He removes one thing and replaces it with another. This is what we call “the exchanged life.” What you cannot do He can do and will do at the moment you look to Him and stop doing it your way.

What are you and I really like according to this illustration? You are like a Captain of a 747 standing on the tarmac, hands in the air, pushing with all your might, trying to get that plane off the ground. That’s the foolishness of a Christian living by his own power. It’s not God’s way. But every single one of us have done it this way and we keep on trying to do it this way. God’s way is the way of replacement, exchanging your life for His life.

Do you remember what the LORD promised through the Prophet Jeremiah? He promised that He’d put something into the heart of every person who enters into the New Covenant. Look at this. Jeremiah 31:31 *“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: (32) Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord:*

*(33) But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”*

Think with me, for a moment, how hard it is to obey and do the right thing when the reality is “you don’t really want to do what’s right”? And God knows that. So, what can be done? He puts within us His Son. And Jesus in you will enable you to “want” to obey, to love Him with your whole heart and soul and mind and strength and to love your neighbor as you love yourself.

You see, what’s impossible with man, obedience, is possible with God’s grace. The Jews broke God’s first covenant, the Mosaic Covenant. They could not, try though they did, they could not keep His Laws. And what has God done to you and me? He’s written His Law in our inward parts. He’s written it on our hearts. He is now our God. We are His people.

And God sees you inside and out. He knows just how much you need Him. And the more you choose to depend upon yourself and your own ability to overcome sin or to do what is right, the more you will fail. And the reason is simple. It’s because the old law always fails when it comes to doing what’s right.

You are saved. You are in Christ. You are a New Creation in Christ. You are a Saint and a child of God. Yes, you still have the “law of sin” remaining in you. But the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is here. So, what is the Christian to do? One thing: make a moment-by-moment surrender of yourself to the LORD because He’s the Only One Who can overcome. Stop staring at that 747 wondering how in the world you’ll ever get it off the ground.

Each one of us must learn by experience that the whole of your Christian life is learning to trust God and to lean on Him for every single thing; to lean on Him for His enablement to do whatever needs to be done. Whatever comes into your life or whatever enters your path or comes into your heart, take it immediately to the LORD and surrender. Practice saying it with me. “I surrender, LORD.”

You see, first, a new law succeeds where an old one fails.

Second, you are no longer in the flesh. Romans 8:3 *“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through* ***the flesh,*** *God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful* ***flesh****, and for sin, condemned sin in the* ***flesh****: (4) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us,* ***who walk not after the flesh****, but after the Spirit.”*

What does that mean? There’s a huge difference between being in the flesh and the physical flesh of your body. Now, I admit that sometimes I wonder just what the LORD is referring to when I read the term “flesh.” So, every time you read it in your Bible, simply ask yourself, “What is the context?”

Do you ever wonder what God sees in you? Let me say this as simply as I can. You are only God says you are.

And, if before I came to Christ, I was a sinner and condemned and lost and blind and with no hope and quote “trying my best,” then that’s what I was because that’s how God saw me.

But, since I repented and since I’ve come to Christ, I am no longer blind. I am no longer condemned and lost and a sinner. Instead, I am able to see, I’m alive in Christ and I am a Saint. That’s how God sees me. That’s what I am.

Folks, listen to the Word of God. A Christian is no longer in the flesh. There’s a huge difference between being in the flesh and the flesh of your human body. Romans 7:5 *“For* ***when we were in the flesh****, the motions [passions] of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. (6) But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.”*

The new way, the Christian way, the way of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus way is the newness of spirit. I do not serve Him by the oldness of the letter.

I’d like to see if I can spell out the difference between being “in the flesh” and our human flesh. Here’s how these two look like this in Romans: “in Adam” versus “in Christ;” what I am by birth versus what I am by the new birth; what I am naturally versus what I am by faith. And what I am when I depend upon myself versus who I am as I depend upon the One Who lives in me.

Now, folks, it is easy to confuse the physical flesh with the sinful flesh. But they are not the same thing. Your physical flesh is not the same as “being in the flesh.”

Look at Jesus. Romans 8:3 *“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: …”*

You see, Jesus was incarnated, which means God entered into a human body. The LORD’s body was a body of flesh. But His physical flesh was not sinful flesh. The LORD’s human body was not a body of sin. He did not have the law of sin and death operating in the members of His body. It was, simply, a human body; a body made of flesh. The human body is not sinful in and of itself.

Every day I get tired and hungry and thirsty. I eat. I drink. I sleep. And that is because I have a constant need to be replenished. That’s a physical body. That’s the kind of body Jesus had.

But also, Christ was made “in the likeness of sinful flesh.” His only connection to Adam was that He was a human being. He was not a sinner. He was connected to Adam by sin like you and me. You can see, can’t you, how easy it is to confuse sinful flesh with physical flesh? Food isn’t sinful. But eating or drinking things that destroy us spiritually is sinful.

You and I are connected to Adam, not just by flesh and blood, but by the fact that we inherited a sin nature. Now, as a Christian, you and I live in a body of physical flesh. But we are no longer living “in the realm of the flesh.”

Look at what the LORD says. Romans 8:8 *“So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. (9) But* ***ye are not in the flesh****, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.”*

And Ephesians 2:11 *“Wherefore remember, that* ***ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh*** *…”*

Can you see with me what the LORD is teaching us here? We are no longer in the flesh. When we were in the flesh, we could not and did not please God. Now, you are in the Spirit because the Spirit lives in you. And you are not only led by the Spirit, but live by the Spirit. So, walk in the Spirit.

My flesh wants me to be praised. My flesh wants me to think I can do many things even though apart from relying on God. My flesh is that part of me that wants me to depend on someone or something other than God. My flesh is that part of me that wants me to give in to temptation.

Yes, once you were in Adam. Now you are in Christ. Being in Adam means you operated apart from God. You depended upon yourself. Being “in Christ” means I am alive to God and I live, not for myself, but for Him Who lives in me. I live according to the Spirit Who now indwells me.

So, please don’t make the mistake of thinking that your physical flesh is a bad thing. What’s bad is that indwelling your physical being is a sin principle. It’s called “the law of sin and death.”

So, there’s a huge difference between being in the flesh and the flesh of your human body. When you read the term “flesh” in the Bible, be absolutely sure you read the context and understand how the word is being used.

First, a new law succeeds where an old one fails.

Second, you are no longer in the flesh.

Third, God saved you so that the righteousness of the law would be fulfilled in you.

Romans 8:4 *“That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”*

What you are is what God says you are. And now, Paul adds; that purpose in your now being made free from the law of sin and death is so that the righteousness of the law would be fulfilled in you who walk after the Spirit.

What’s the life of a Christian really like? Here’s what it’s like. The life of a Christian is a life in which I do everything in dependence upon Someone Else.

Folks, your natural way of doing things is not God’s way. Every day and every hour of the day you must turn yourself to God and look to Him for help, for direction, for strength, for His presence, for His personal love for you, for His forgiveness, etc. and etc.

If you are saved, then your daily life is a life of “LORD, you’re in charge. Thank you for loving me and blessing me and providing for me. Here’s my life. Use me as You please.”

Ask yourself today, “Is this what I would naturally do?” Then, turn to the LORD and say “LORD, I want to do what You’d want me to do.”

You see, the Christian life is the Life of Christ. He not only owns you and you are His servant. But He lives in you and wants to live His life through you. It’s that simple. The Christian life is a life of dependence upon the Holy Spirit of Christ Who indwells you.

So, let’s apply this. Let’s say you realize and recognize a need for patience with someone in your life. What can you do? You don’t need to ask God for patience, although all of us have done exactly that. Instead, you say to the LORD. “Be my patience, LORD.” You can’t get patience without getting Him. He is your patience. Just like He’s your love and your kindness and your Truth and your meekness and your wisdom and your righteousness and so forth. You see, He’s your Life.

I Corinthians 1:30 *“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: …”*

The Christian Life is knowing Christ more and more and knowing Him as He really is. Stop trying to find out more about Christ intellectually and begin to find out more of Him personally. That’s how you grow spiritually. And the best thing that will even happen in your life is for you to understand how much you need Him.

So, what will it be? Will you sit on the tarmac and stare at your plane, trying to figure out how to get that thing in the air? Or will you surrender to the law of aerodynamics?

Will you operate under your own power or will you surrender to the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus? The LORD won’t make you do it. It’s your choice. So, what will it be?

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 389 “Spirit Of The Living God”