

Lenten Devotional March 4, 2018

Scripture

Romans 8:1-10

¹There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law - indeed it cannot, ⁸and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

Devotional

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In this passage, Paul reminds us of what was at stake when Jesus allowed himself to be sacrificed on the cross—humanity's salvation. Paul makes a distinction between two types of people—the person who is “in Christ Jesus” and the one who “lives according to the flesh”—and their relationship to God. To be “in Christ Jesus” means to be guided by the Spirit of God who dwells within us. To be “in the flesh” is to be hostile to God and refuse to submit to God's commands. Paul was careful to note that humanity's separation from our sinful nature can only be done if the Spirit of Christ dwells in us. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross conquered the nature of sin that held us bound. No longer are we condemned to death; rather we have been made alive through the righteousness of Christ Jesus.

In the face of the many concerns that surrounds us—the ravages of natural storms and disasters, the tension from the threat of nuclear warfare, the strife of social injustices—we are also reminded that we do not have to live and act out of our sinful nature, for we have been freed to act through the Spirit of God that dwells in us. Being set free from the bondage of sin and death, we are called to reflect the Spirit of God within us in all that we do and toward all those whom we encounter. This Lenten season, may we reflect on God's abiding love that has set us free, and may we in turn love and care for others as we ourselves are loved.

Prayer

Triune God, thank you for the gift of life granted through the death and resurrection of your son Jesus. Thank you for your Spirit that dwells in us and guides us. Lord, may we seek to please you and follow your commands always. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.