

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost – Epistle

“Anything You Put Your Mind To, You Can Do It”

Romans 8:1-11

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 10)

Analysis by Timothy J. Hoyer

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For 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, 4 so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 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 set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For 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, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But 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. 10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his

Spirit that dwells in you.

DIAGNOSIS: Mind Set

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – *The Crime*

Odd that when authority is absent values are quickly abandoned. If the parent goes out, the children watch TV instead of doing their homework. If the boss leaves for a meeting, the workers relax and go home a little early. We will do things for our own gain because “He’ll never know.” Actually, it is not that “He’ll never know.” It’s that he won’t see us doing it. He won’t be able to evaluate us according to the values that we follow to make us look good. The student looks good by cooperating, standing in line, and listening quietly. But if the teacher is gone, there is no reason to look good. If the boss is gone, there is no one to impress in order to get a raise. On our own we do not keep the values that are important to keep things working and that keep us safe. We do not keep the values because we don’t want to. Indeed, we can’t keep them.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – *The Motive*

Whether we keep the values when authority is present or we act for our own benefit when authority is absent, in either case we are motivated to do what makes us look good. Our focus is on ourselves. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh (v. 5). The standard for what is good is not the straight line from God but the line curved inwardly to our own heart. Thus, it is our own heart that we follow and we are opposed to anything that won’t let us do so. We are even opposed to God; we are hostile to God (v. 7). Our mind is set on our own desires (flesh). The flesh-set mind does not submit to God’s law—indeed it cannot (v. 7). With our mind set on the flesh, we think God has gone away and we do what we

want for our benefit. Even when we do follow God's values, we do it only because we want to look good to God. If we think God is watching, we comply for our benefit. We are not obeying God out of fear of God, but out of our own hope for selfish gain. That self-centered attitude is to be without true love for God. We trust ourselves instead of God. And with no faith there is no pleasing God. Those who are of the flesh cannot please God (v. 8).

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – The Sentence

With our mind set on the flesh, we cause harm to others. God works to protect others by giving us values to live by. God protects us for the purpose of sending us One to save us from our flesh-set mind. The law, values, cannot change our inward focus. For the law is weakened by our flesh (v. 3). God does not want harm done to God's creation. God does not want us to trust ourselves instead of God. For our crime of not listening to God, we are rightfully found guilty. God has condemned sin in the flesh (v. 3). Because of sin we are dead to God (v. 10). We are jailed by sin and death.

PROGNOSIS: Spirit Set

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – The Appeal

But God has done what the law could not do. God sent God's Son in the likeness of sinful flesh in order to deal with sin. The only way to deal with sin is to condemn it-to kill it. So Jesus died on the cross, fulfilling the just requirement of the law on our behalf. We know that God's will has been fulfilled because God raised Jesus from the dead! We are now free from sin and death. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and of death (v. 20). We are free from God's judgment. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (v. 1).

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (External Solution) – Freedom

In Christ, we now have the mind of Christ instead of a mind set on the flesh. Christ is now in us. By the giving of Christ to us through the spoken word, we are in the Spirit of Christ. We are no longer in the flesh, since the Spirit of God dwells in us. We walk in the Spirit of Christ. We live according to the Spirit of Christ. We are alive to God through the Spirit of Christ. We trust Christ to be the value God wants to see in us. For Christ is the one risen from the dead.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – *A Life Free of Crime*

To have our mind set on the Spirit is life and peace. We who live to God according to the Spirit set our minds on the things of the Spirit. That Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. So our minds are set on Christ's values-the law of the Spirit of Christ. The values of Christ are to set us free from sin and death. Christ's value is to have mercy for those condemned by God. Christ's value is to forgive those under sin and death. Christ's value is to give life to those who are dead to God according to the flesh. Thus, with the Spirit of Christ in us, we no longer live by our values only if authority is present. The Spirit is in us. Thus, when the teacher is out, we still cooperate and listen. When the boss leaves, we still do our work as hard and honest as before. If the parent goes out, the children are still responsible and do their homework. Even more, we who know the source of mercy, give mercy to those we meet who are feeling condemned by cancer. We forgive our career-driven, grown children who become addicted to prescribed medication and alcohol. With the Spirit ever-present in us to keep us free from sin and death and God's condemnation-whenever we are-we live to give mercy and peace.