

May 3, 2020 – The Law of the Spirit of Life
From the Series: Waiting with Wonder: Life in the Spirit

We are a few weeks now into the season of Easter. A season of the year we typically devote to the Holy Spirit, here at Park Road and we're now in the middle of a sermon series called *"Waiting with wonder: Life in the Spirit."*

Today, I hope we'll see that it's actually very fitting for us to focus on the Spirit during the season of Easter. Typically, during Holy Week and Easter, we spend a lot of time thinking about God the Son and God the Father. We don't often focus on the work of the Spirit... BUT, in fact, as we heard in the passage we just read, God's Spirit, that lives in the Christian, that indwells the Christian, is a token, a down payment, on the reality that though we will one day die, our bodies will rise to new life just as Christ's own body rose. So, the Spirit and Easter are intertwined. Today's passage comes from one of the great chapters of the Bible. In fact, many may say it's the greatest chapter in the Bible – Romans 8.

All of us, whether we realize it or not, live by a certain code. Or a principle. A rule of life if you will. Sometimes, for very organized and meticulous people, the rule of life is written down. There's a flow chart. A spreadsheet. For others maybe it's an unwritten rule, an unwritten code, but it is running under the surface. It's like a computer program running in the background. I think we're all familiar with this. It's an ancient practice, a spiritual practice within monasteries and religious traditions. But it's also communicated to us and marketed to us today... Jordan Peterson, the Canadian psychologist had a very popular book a few years ago called the *12 Rules of Life: An Anecdote to Chaos*.

Sports. There are the rules of the game but then there are all these unwritten rules and codes. Things you should and shouldn't do that govern the game and keep the SPIRIT of the game.

The apostle Paul, right in the middle of this letter to the Romans, says that something... in fact someone, has come into the life of the Christian and has brought the law of the Spirit of life. The RULE of the spirit of life. The Principle of the spirit of life. In other words... the Spirit of God IN US, now becomes the most distinctive characteristic of the Christian. He is what is always running in the background. He is what is leading us and transforming us.

So, this morning I want us to see that Life in the Spirit is succumbing to the law of the Spirit, to give way to the Law of the Spirit in your life. We all live by a code, a rule., a law of life... And for the Christian, it is the Spirit. I want to tackle this amazing passage... in four brief points. And, I want to do it by actually turning to Jesus, to God the Son, and let the way the Spirit influenced His life shape the way we see the law of the Spirit of life in our lives. We'll look at first...The God who Sends.... Second, The God who Trains... Third, The God who Dwells... and Finally... The God who frees...This is the law of the Spirit in the Life of the Christian.

In the early verses of the Gospel of Mark, his account opens with Jesus' and in that remarkable moment, Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist. In Mark 1:10 – *"...when he came*

out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased." This is a moment in the scriptures where we clearly see the Trinity at work. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And Paul here, stresses that God SENT the Son, in order that we might receive this new LAW of the Spirit. V. 3 – *"By sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."*

Jesus Christ, by taking sin upon himself, was condemned in order that righteousness might be fulfilled in us by the Spirit. The Spirit is Active with the Son.

We have a tendency I think, to separate the work of the Trinity. We think of the Old Testament as the Father's part of the Bible, The Gospels as Jesus', the Son's part of the Bible. And then some of those letters in the back of the Bible and all those crazy things the disciples did in the book of Acts, that's the Holy Spirit's part.

But as TJ showed us last week, the Spirit of God has been at work throughout all of redemptive history. And now, for the one who receives Jesus, the law of the Spirit of life comes in and makes us alive in Jesus Christ... and the result? v. 1- *"there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."*

That is a VERY famous verse. One so famous that I often wonder if we fully grasp what is being said... Not only does it mean our sin doesn't condemn us... it means there is now no possibility of ever being condemned by our sin! We will never be condemned... How?

Because the Spirit of Life is at work in us. The Spirit works in us to do what we cannot do on our own. *"in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled... for those who live according to the Spirit."*

God sends the Son to free us from the law of sin and death and God sends the Spirit of the Son to transform us. To wipe out sin in our lives. Those who are in Christ Jesus can never be condemned by their Sin, and are now being led by the Spirit. The Law of the Spirit. Living under the RULE, the CODE of the Spirit, is now the normal way of life for the Christian.

Now, for modern people in 2020. Most would say that they recognize the value of spiritual life. Most large companies want their employees to take care of their spiritual lives. Last week in the Q&A after the service, we mentioned how there is a fascination even with forces in the universe that drive us... That lead us together for instance. So, there is an appetite for spiritual living in the modern world.

But Christianity says, what lives inside of you, for those who are in Christ, is not some spiritual element that makes up part of the universe. What is inside of us, is a PERSON. The person of the HOLY Spirit. The Spirit of the SON. Do you see the difference? Living a Spiritual life by tapping into your own spirituality is simply another form of self-

management... or self-adjustment. Ultimately, even your spiritual life is then something controlled by you. Christianity says something different entirely. It says God's Spirit now lives in you and through His Spirit you are now being transformed not by your own power, but through His Spirit. And because it's the Spirit and not ourselves... There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.

Shortly after Jesus' baptism we're told he goes out into the wilderness where he has an encounter with Satan... and this is where we see secondly, see, 2. The God Who Trains.

Luke 4, *"And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil."* Here again is a picture of Jesus and the Spirit active together. Led by the Holy Spirit, Jesus faces the temptations of the Devil. Satan presents Jesus with every type of temptation of the flesh, food, power, wealth. And led by the Spirit, Jesus resists the temptations.

Paul explains something similar to this for us. A life that is being ruled by the Spirit, finds himself or herself in this constant fluctuation between the flesh and the Spirit. Some set their minds on things of the flesh, some set their minds on things of the spirit. So, what does that mean? To set your mind on the things of the Spirit... Well, I don't think it means sitting in a dark place or a special place and really concentrating hard to set our mind on the Spirit.

What it does mean I think, is much more than just thinking about something. More than just a cognitive exercise. It means to be preoccupied with something. You know when you're preoccupied? Like you're here but you're not here? To set our minds on the Spirit is to be preoccupied with Him. Our mind, our hearts, our desires are just going that way. When there's nothing else to distract us, that's where our minds go. Where our desires go. We know though, that's a real issue for us, because when we're preoccupied, often, it is NOT with the things of the Spirit.

This life we have been living for the past six weeks or so, has revealed that... Right? How we're filling our time? Where our minds are going? Where they're drifting off to?

The problem is that Setting our minds on the Spirit, instead of the flesh is a losing battle for us. Under our own power we are going to lose that battle. UNLESS, we understand what we have!

I heard someone use the illustration of finding an old lamp in the attic. You dust it off. It seems like it was once really beautiful... You bring it downstairs and you start to get excited about where you can put it on display and you go to plug it into the electric socket... and then you realize.... This is an old gas lamp. No amount of electricity is going to set it alight.

What do we have? The Christian has the Spirit of God in them, that is training us to choose the things of the Spirit over the things of the flesh. Our minds and hearts and habits are being shaped and transformed to want and desire the things of the Spirit so that we become more and more preoccupied with Him and not the temptations of the flesh.

Third, the law of the Spirit of life helps us to see...The God Who Dwells...

As Jesus went about his ministry, he demonstrated time and again that the Spirit was with him energizing him to do works of wonder and power. Matthew 12:28 – Jesus says... *“If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”*

This really is what is extraordinary about what Paul is saying. The Same Spirit that was with Jesus dwells in you and in me. Again, this is what is different from a more modern, secularized version of spirituality the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead dwells in you.

v. 11 – *“If the same Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”* This really is the power and genius of Christianity and the gospel right here that distinguishes it from any other religion or spirituality in the world. God the Son, sent to us, who dies on the cross taking on our sin is resurrected from the dead by the Spirit of God. And now, that same spirit lives in you! If this is true, then every single thing in the universe, and every single thing in my universe, my life changes.

My life begins to live by a NEW LAW... a NEW RULE... A law of life. And that law is the law of the Spirit of LIFE... Resurrection LIFE. And as we live with this resurrection life in the Spirit. It even begins to chip away at that old enemy that old fear that all of us have. The fear that one day we will die that we will be no more.

The great hope of the Christian is that one day, even though our mortal bodies will die, the Same Spirit who raised Jesus will raise our own bodies. THIS is the work of the Spirit in your very own life. IN your very own body. This is the God who dwells in us.

And finally, as we begin to close, The Law of the Spirit of life leads us to see The God Who Frees. Remember the words of Jesus... when he stood in the temple early in his ministry? Just after returning from Satan’s temptations in the wilderness?

Luke 4:14 – *“And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through the surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all... and he said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim liberty to the captives...”* Jesus is pretty clear here... the work of the Spirit... Is to free those in bondage. To bring Liberty to the captives. And, what has Paul been telling us all along? V. 2 of our passage... *“For the Law of the Spirit of Life has set you free in Christ Jesus!”*

Do you see? This has been the work all along. To set us free from the law of sin and death and to give us a NEW law. To give us the spirit. And here’s what the Spirit does in us, as He is dwelling in us and training us to walk according to His leading... All the while he is screaming to our hearts... v. 14 and 15 – *“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are Sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of Adoption as sons, by whom we cry, Abba! Father!”*

You see, if you're going to live with a certain code...or a law of life... a rule of life... then that code, that thing becomes the most important thing about you. Whatever it is, it becomes the most distinctive thing about you, the most recognizable thing about you.

The problem is, so many other things preoccupy us. We let them define us. We begin to think this particular something is worth setting our minds and hearts on, because the results will be so good. And subtly the most important thing about us becomes a life that is more interested in the things of the flesh, in the approval of others, in having enough - "enoughness" in the eyes of the world. Instead of remembering that the Spirit who raised Jesus Christ lives in us.

The gospel tells us that the law of the Spirit of life, if we receive it into our hearts, if you receive it- becomes the most important thing about you. You have been freed! You have been made a son, a daughter of God! And there is no room to go back to that captivity of the living under our own power, to living according to the flesh. Even though we are tempted, The Spirit of God that dwells in us reminds us, we are children of God.

I read an article this week about a husband and wife that recently had found themselves working together from home. This is something many are experiencing now for the first time... How's that going by the way?

This particular woman did have a law degree but chose to stay at home to be with the kids, but recently started working for her husband who had just opened his own law firm. She wrote this... "Rather than hire an associate to help, he looked across the breakfast table to yours truly. So, I dusted five years' worth of spit-up and Legos off my law degree and set to writing..."

She talks about how she became increasingly anxious though as she began to work towards her first deadline... and she writes, "Like any self-respecting sinner, I projected my anxiety onto someone I love..." Gosh, I really love that line... She goes on, "Finally, in bewildered exasperation, he asked what was the matter.... All in one breath, my fear was laid bare: "I'm nothing but smoke and mirrors, my writing is garbage, and you're about to find out and I can't stand it." I have been married to this man for seven years. He held my hand when my grandmother died, held my hair back through morning sickness, and handed me our newly born sons. There is no one on earth with whom I am more intimate. Yet, there is still a face. There are still parts of me I want to present to him polished shiny-perfect instead of tarnished and real. I need my husband to believe that I am smart and that my work is as good as advertised... He could have "damned me with praise." He could have said of course the draft would be good.... I would have been left even more wretched, more cemented in my need to hold up the false front... He didn't say any of those things... Instead, he set aside his frustration... and said, "Babe, we're all phonies. And whatever you do, there'll be no judgment here." She said, "I could breathe. I was so convinced that nothing I could offer would be good enough, yet still he found me wholly sufficient."

On our own we're all faking it. On our own we're all phonies. But, the Law of the Spirit of Life screams when we think we're not enough, when we think we're too far, when we think

we don't deserve it... "there's now no condemnation..." "There's no judgment here..." You are free.

THAT is a law to live by. That is a CODE to live by... and it's the most important thing about you and me... so let him lead you. Let the Spirit of God lead you to receive it.

Let's Pray.