

In this lesson Paul draws a sharp contrast between the mind set on the flesh, and the mind set on the Spirit. The person oriented only toward this temporal world with its rewards and pleasures can neither keep the law nor please God. Only through the grace of God in Christ can a fundamental reorientation toward God's Spirit occur. When God's Spirit quickens faith there is no longer any condemnation, for the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead now indwells those so animated.

Please listen now as I read this passage from the book of Romans.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Matthew 13:1-9

Our Gospel is Jesus' parable of the sower, together with its interpretation. The story by itself may once have been used to stress how surprisingly fruitful God's power can be, quite apart from human expectations or control. With its explanation the parable was used as an allegory by early Christians to help them understand the missionary situation of the church. Because of the work of the devil and human weakness and sin, the word they preached did not always produce. But, in the right circumstances, its fruit could be anywhere from substantial to amazing.

Hear now these words from Matthew's gospel.

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop - a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear."

Liturgist: This is the gospel message of our Lord and Savior

All: May the reading and the hearing of Your word inform our minds, comfort our souls, and guide our feet.