

WE ARE SET FOR LIFE!
Sermon for the 5th Sunday in Lent, 2026
Romans 8:1-11

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is the Second Reading from before, Romans 8:1-11.

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

When someone wins big in the lotto, it is often said that they are “set for life.” Such people can enjoy a life of luxury, free from money worries and without concern for the future, at least financially. I suppose it would be great not to have to stress about cash and to do whatever you please.

But money or wealth is not everything, because you can lose it all. It’s more important to lay up “*treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal*” (Matt. 6:20), and this is really what Paul had in mind in today’s text from Romans. Whether we have been blessed with much or not, we are already rich—not because we’ve won big, or are healthy or happy, or anything else—we’re rich because we are in Christ Jesus. We are rich because no matter what we have to deal with here on earth, we are safe in the care of Jesus, and *that* is true wealth.

A little earlier in his Letter to the Romans, Paul describes how difficult our battles with sin can be, using himself as an example. He says, “*For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out*” (7:18). As a child of God, Paul struggled with his sinful nature. He had sinful desires and knew they were wrong. He tried to avoid sin but inevitably failed. He said, “*I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*” (v. 23-24). Paul saw the sin that was in him, the natural corruption that led him to act in sinful ways. He recognised all too well that the sins that accompanied the flesh were the sins we wrestle with every day and which make us the wretched sinners that we are.

“*Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*” Whenever we read these words, we ought to see ourselves. Psalm 1 reads, “*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ² but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night*” (1-2).

We delight in the Law of God, and we want to do God’s will, but sin keeps getting in the way, spoiling our best efforts. It is terribly frustrating and makes us miserable. That is why we confess our sins, and this confession needs to be honest. If we don’t recognise our sins and our failures, if we don’t admit those things that put our salvation at risk, then we’re being sinfully dishonest. We all have this battle going on inside, and it’s one that’ll continually plague us this side of heaven, but just because we have this battle going on inside of us doesn’t mean all is lost. To the contrary, Paul writes, “**Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**”

How so? Because a force greater and stronger than sin has appeared on the scene. Through Jesus Christ, “**the law of the Spirit of life**” has set us free from “**the law of sin and death.**” The condemnation we deserve because of our sins has been taken away. We’re wretched sinners who deserve condemnation and God’s anger, and yet, despite all this, we’re not condemned. The “**Spirit of life,**” that is, the Holy Spirit, has set us free from the law of sin that brings death. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, we have been given the free gift of faith in Christ and have eternal life. All our sins have been forgiven and our guilt cleansed because Christ has given us “**the Spirit of life,**” who brings absolution and pardon. This absolution is ours because Christ has done for us what we couldn’t do for ourselves.

Paul goes on to say, **“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 for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us...”**

Did you catch what Paul says? He says that because we’re sinful and unable to keep the Law, the things we do cannot save us. We’ll never earn our way to heaven, and no one will enter heaven because he or she is a good person. It doesn’t work that way. Instead, the Father has sent His Son to do what the Law couldn’t do – that is, to save us. Jesus Christ took on our likeness and fulfilled the Law by doing what we can’t. He kept every law that we broke. He always kept His Father as number one. He never gossiped or said hurtful things. He never stole, lied, or coveted. He never lusted, hated, or mistreated anyone He loved. He was perfect, and then, because He had done everything His Father had commanded, He was killed. He took our place under God’s Law and was condemned for our sins. He died in our place, and because He fulfilled the Law, we have now fulfilled it. He has given us what we couldn’t obtain on our own. His death has guaranteed that we’re forgiven, and we have a new Spirit within us. So now we really understand what Paul meant when he said, **“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”** We are not condemned, but are set for life.

Now that we have been set free, so that our minds are set on the things of God, Paul writes, **“You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.”**

There is no doubt in Paul’s mind that Christ is dwelling in the hearts of his readers through faith worked by the Holy Spirit. This is a really powerful verse, and what it means is that we are different. Because the Holy Spirit dwells in us, our thinking isn’t focused on sin or the temptations of the flesh; it’s focused on God.

As children of God, we are different; that is why we face so much hardship in today’s world. There are common issues we disagree on with the world—such as abortion and single-sex marriage. That’s why when we speak out against these practices, *we are often met with contempt*. There are many other worldly matters we oppose or want to avoid, and we are scorned for it. The core issue is that any attempt to conform to modern culture and its way of life, when it conflicts with the Word of God, means we are embracing the spirit of the flesh. As Paul warns, **“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.”**

These two mindsets are mutually exclusive. You cannot hold two different viewpoints simultaneously, and it’s especially true that whenever we focus on the things of the flesh or the world, our thoughts tend to stray from God. Christ has paid the price for our salvation; He has given us life, and now, with God’s help, we live as those who possess a new Spirit—God’s Holy Spirit.

So does this mean we never sin? Of course not. I wish it were true, but it’s not, and we know that all too well. As children of our heavenly Father, our minds are set on the things of God, but temptations swirl all around us, and we’re going to succumb to them, and we’re going to sin. But, and this is the good news, because the Spirit of God dwells in us, we’re not just sinners; we’re also saints. We’re sinners because we sin, but we’re saints because we’re forgiven, and **“there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”** Can you see a pattern? Because we’re forgiven and not condemned for sins and because Christ has done what’s necessary, sin has no dominion over us. It can’t control us because we have the Spirit of God. And because we have this Spirit, we have the power to resist temptation and to turn to God when we do sin.

That is why we always speak again and again of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

In baptism, we are given the power to tell that devil and the world that we do not belong to them, neither do we set our minds on them. As Luther once said, *“Sin remains in our flesh even until death and works without ceasing. But so long as we do not give our consent to it or desire to remain in it, sin*

*is so overruled by our baptism that it does not condemn us and is not harmful to us. Rather it is daily being more and more destroyed in us until our death.”*¹

And in the Lord’s Supper, we receive a great treasure: the forgiveness of sins. Our Lord’s words “*given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins*” assure us that this treasure “*is passed along and made our very own.*”² “For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are far more powerful than anything we’ll encounter in this world, and it’s why Paul can say, “**For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.**”

Life and peace are two things we need so very badly, and two things that we’ll never get from this world. True life and peace only come from the Spirit of God. We’re blessed with the faith to keep our minds set on the things of the Spirit, and as Paul promises us, “**if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.**” That righteousness is ours because Christ has given us His righteousness. It’s not just Christ’s righteousness that’s in us; there’s something else. He is in us, and we are in Him.

Dear friends, because Christ is in us and we are in Him, we are set for life. We are not condemned because of our sins. Instead, we have been given life and peace. This is such wonderful news for all of us wretched sinners. We fail, we sin, we succumb to temptation, and yet, God is there forgiving and renewing a right spirit within us—His Spirit, and that Spirit will be with us always. Paul finishes today by saying, “**If the 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.**”

Eternal life is already a *present reality*, but until we leave this sin-stained world, we shall always have our sinful nature, doing things contrary to God. One day, we shall leave our sinful nature and our sins behind. We have been given life in this world, and our Lord will give us life in the next. As we await the call to enter the kingdom prepared for us before the foundation of the world,³ let us keep our minds set on Him. Indeed, we are set for life, set for this life, and the next. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ *Luther’s Works, Word and Sacrament I*. Fortress Press, Philadelphia. Page 35.

² *The Large Catechism, V 29*

³ Matthew 25:34