

Based on Romans 8:1-11
Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 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, 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. 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. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 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, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 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. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 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.

Romans 8:1-11

Even a brief survey of the world around us should suggest that everyone is capable of fear, jealousy, selfishness, and anger. In other words, all of us are capable of sin and even though most of us fall well short of being evil, we are all capable of doing things that harm others, if not physically, at least spiritually.

St Paul's great insight was that since we are all inherently capable of sin, none of us are ever fully righteous even if we steadfastly follow the Law carefully and mindfully. In day-to-day life there are so many choices which aren't clearly defined by the law that, because of our inherent *capability* to sin, we will regularly be faced with opportunities to act outside of God's will even when we are trying hard not to. Inevitably then, we will occasionally find ourselves crosswise with God, or in other words, in a state of sin.

As Paul tells us here, it isn't *our* actions or choices that transcend our sinfulness and make us worthy to stand before God. Rather it is only through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus that we achieve any kind of righteousness. We can only stand blameless before God because Christ vouches for us.

To be “in the Spirit” as Paul writes is to be in a state of grace through our faith - our willingness to trust Jesus and to hold onto the promises he offers us. Faith is a gift offered to all people, though some may reject it, the offer stands eternally. And we who do accept this gift, even imperfectly, are offered freedom from the power of sin over us. So now, because of Jesus the only power sin and evil has over us is the power we are willing to give it. To follow Jesus is to accept our vulnerability to sin and to continually make the effort to reject it by focusing on doing what Jesus commands; to encounter the world with love, humility, mercy, and hope.