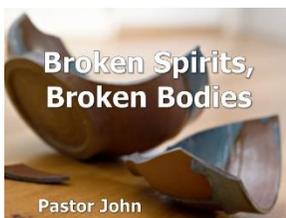


"Broken Spirits, Broken Bodies"

July 16, 2017

Scripture: Romans 8: 1-11

¹If you belong to Christ Jesus, you won't be punished. ²The Holy Spirit will give you life that comes from Christ Jesus and will set you free from sin and death. ³The Law of Moses cannot do this, because our selfish desires make the Law weak. But God set you free when he sent his own Son to be like us sinners and to be a sacrifice for our sin. God used Christ's body to condemn sin. ⁴He did this, so that we would do what the Law commands by obeying the Spirit instead of our own desires. ⁵People who are ruled by their desires think only of themselves. Everyone who is ruled by the Holy Spirit thinks about spiritual things. ⁶If our minds are ruled by our desires, we will die. But if our minds are ruled by the Spirit, we will have life and peace. ⁷Our desires fight against God, because they do not and cannot obey God's laws. ⁸If we follow our desires, we cannot please God. ⁹You are no longer ruled by your desires, but by God's Spirit, who lives in you. People who don't have the Spirit of Christ in them don't belong to him. ¹⁰But Christ lives in you. So you are alive because God has accepted you, even though your bodies must die because of your sins. ¹¹Yet God raised Jesus to life! God's Spirit now lives in you, and he will raise you to life by his Spirit.



Today we begin a new series entitled "Broken: Good News for Tough Times". The series is based in the heart of the book of Romans – chapters eight through eleven – and will look at

how God sustains us in the midst of our brokenness, both within and without, helping us find wholeness and unity, no matter what crises we are facing. Within our congregation, we have certainly had our share of loss this year. Sitting close to you is someone who has lost a husband or a son or a wife or a parent or a cousin or a nephew. Sitting near you are others who have experienced some other type of loss. For example, for some here today, the prolonged lack of moisture has caused loss on the farm or ranch. With loss comes brokenness. When one looks at the world out there we see violence and disaster, we see hurting and suffering. It is easy to see that we live in a broken world. So, for us to hear about the good news that God brings through Jesus Christ is indeed timely for us. Let us pray.

Paul wrote the book of Romans to people and churches that he never met. Through his letter, he hoped to encourage and build up this community of believers. Paul knew from personal experience that living as a Christian was dangerous and even perilous. He has been on both sides of this – first as attacker of the faith and now as defender and champion of the faith. The world's culture was undergoing change and was therefore unpredictable. And it was also becoming increasingly diverse, which allowed for the exploration and development of new thoughts and ideas, faith being just one of them. It was in this environment that Paul addressed the new believers in Rome.

Leading into today's passage, Paul has just finished addressing the sin that lives within all of us at the end of chapter seven. At the end of this chapter, Paul

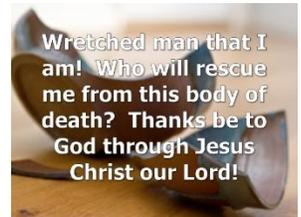
writes about the inner conflict that exists inside all of us. Paul speaks of how the Law is spiritual but that we are of the flesh. He writes, "I do not do what I want but I do the very thing I hate" and "I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do". Paul acknowledges that "evil lies close at hand".

Each and every day we too have a battle waged within us, represented by this picture that is maybe familiar to us.



Whispering in one ear is the Holy Spirit, calling us to righteousness and holy living. On the other side, whispering into our other ear, is Satan, always trying to draw us away from the things of God. And so it goes. As Paul draws to the conclusion of chapter seven, he

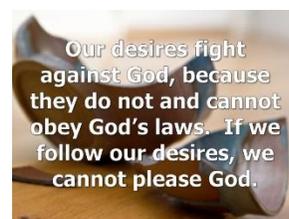
writes these words: "*Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*" This too is our only hope: Jesus Christ.



Chapter eight begins with the fact that we belong to Christ Jesus. Amen. Paul goes on to remind the church in Rome, and us, that the Holy Spirit will give us life and through this new life we will be set free from sin. That is our promise. But it is not that easy, is it? You and I know that the walk of faith is not easy. We grinned or laughed or snickered at the image of an angel on one shoulder and the devil on the other shoulder, but that is our reality. Sin and temptation are constantly at hand. It is a constant choice to choose God over the world. It is a choice we all face. Paul writes of the two options in verse five: "*People who are ruled by their desires think only of themselves. Everyone who is ruled by the Holy Spirit thinks about*

spiritual things". Paul makes it sound so easy, like it is a simple choice. Choose to be ruled by the Holy Spirit and be set free from your sin! Just choose!

It is not that easy, is it? In verses seven and eight, Paul writes of what I believe is our natural bent towards sin. Temptation and sin entice us. They draw us in. They call out to us. Sin is so easy to fall into. It takes will power and courage to not sin. The world and Satan place the desires of the flesh, sin and temptation, ever before us. Paul writes of this struggle: "*Our desires fight against God, because they do not and cannot obey God's laws. If we follow our desires, we cannot please God*". When we live to please our desires, we soon find that we are living with broken spirits. God and sin cannot dwell within us together, so when we are in sin we are in a broken relationship with our Lord. This is one cause of a broken spirit within us.

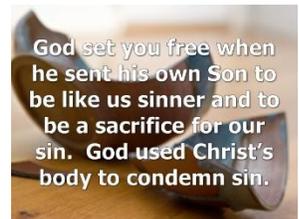


Sin is not the only road to a broken spirit. When we experience a difficult loss in our lives, like we talked about at the beginning of our time together today, we usually find ourselves in a place of brokenness. And other people and their actions can also lead to brokenness in us. Other people's greed or malice or hatred or prejudice can negatively affect us and can lead to a broken spirit within us. Once we are in that place of brokenness, our broken spirits can often lead to broken bodies.

The effects of sin in our lives can, of course, lead directly to broken bodies. The abuse of alcohol or drugs can have lifelong impacts on our bodies, leaving them permanently scared and damaged. Sexual sin can lead to disease and emotional issues that adversely impact us for the rest of our lives. The heavy weight of grief can also lead to a broken body as well. Living under the pressure of hatred or prejudice or injustice can affect our health too. Maladies such as cancer and ulcers can come from broken spirits and broken bodies. Loss of sleep and depression and anxiety can also result from our brokenness. When we live with a broken spirit, we often will come to experience broken bodies as well.

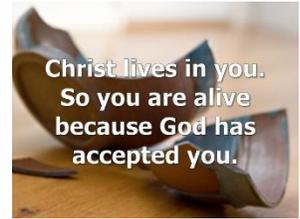
But, thanks be to God, we are not without hope and we are not alone. Whatever the cause of our brokenness, Jesus reaches out and offers us healing and hope. No matter the cause of our pain and brokenness, Jesus came to defeat the power of sin and death and He offers that victory to us today.

Verse three reminds us of this: *"God set you free when he sent his own Son to be like us sinners and to be a sacrifice for our sin. God used Christ's body to condemn sin"*. Through



Jesus' offering on the cross, sin has been defeated. We do not need to remain in our sin and we do not have to succumb to the desires of our fleshy bodies. What rules us does not have to be our desires. We can ask for help and can allow the Holy Spirit living in us to be what rules our lives. We cannot do it on our own. We must admit our weakness and call on the power of God to be present in our lives. It is a constant battle, so we must be willing to call on the Spirit often and repeatedly.

Paul goes on, in verse ten, to remind us of our relationship with God and Jesus. He reminds us, "*Christ lives in you. So, you are alive because God has accepted you*". We are alive to live in the Spirit. Here we can focus on the things of the Spirit – compassion, kindness, fairness, unity, and love. When Christ lives in us, we experience healing and wholeness for our broken spirits. Through Christ's healing, we can in turn offer hope and healing to our broken world. To illustrate this, I share a story:



Bill was a drunk, converted at a city mission. Before his conversion, he had gained a reputation as a tramp and alcoholic for whom there was no hope. But when he was converted everything changed. He became the most caring person at the mission. He spent all his days there doing whatever needed to be done. There was never anything he was asked to do that he considered beneath him. Whether it was cleaning up vomit left by some alcoholic or scrubbing toilets used by men who left them filthy, Bill did it all with a heart of gratitude. He could be counted on to feed any man who wandered in off the streets and care for his needs when he was unable to care for himself.

One evening after the mission director delivered his evangelistic message to the usual crowd of solemn men with drooped heads, one of them came down to the altar and kneeled to pray, crying out to God to help him change. The repentant drunk kept shouting, "O God make me like Bill! Make me like Bill! Make me like Bill!" The director of the mission leaned over and said, "Wouldn't

it be better if you pray, 'Make me like Jesus?'" After thinking about it for a few seconds, the man looked up and asked, "Is he like Bill?"

Like Bill, we can all be healed of the brokenness that is within us, whatever the cause. That is God's desire for each of us. He so wants us to find healing because we are His beloved children. Like Bill, we too can all lead whole lives, lives that bear witness to Jesus, lives that are alive in Christ.

God's desire for us is to be whole and to live righteous lives. God gives us the Holy Spirit because he knows that we cannot do this on our own. The Holy Spirit is a tremendous gift from God. Living with broken spirits and broken bodies is not God's plan for His children. If this is where you find yourself today, as some here surely do, know that God wants to bring you healing and wholeness. If this is where you find yourself today, in a place of brokenness, I invite you to come forward during the offertory, to receive prayer and to be anointed with oil. Open yourself up to God's healing power.

Our passage today closes with these words: *"God raised Jesus to life! God's Spirit now lives in you, and he will raise you to life by his Spirit"*. This is our promise. This is our hope. Claim Jesus as Lord and Savior and He will bring healing and wholeness and hope into the brokenness of our lives. Call on the power of Jesus and allow the Spirit to lead and guide you. Claim life. Let us pray.



GPS – Grow, Pray, Serve

- 1) When do you feel the greatest pull of sin in your life? How can you call on God to help you overcome these desires of the flesh?
- 2) When have you experienced a “broken spirit” that led to a “broken body”? How did you experience God’s healing and restoration of hope?
- 3) How could God use the brokenness and the healing that you have been through to help others who are broken and in need of healing?