

All he ever wanted was to hear three words, "Good job, son." All he ever really wanted in life was to know that the most important man in his life approved of him. But his Father was not accustomed to saying such things, maybe he thought his son would become soft and lazy if he heard words that said he was special. Or maybe things were exactly as the son thought, his father simply did not approve of him, truly love him. Whatever the case the boy grew into a man still ^{longing} ~~searching~~ for those three words, "Good job, son."

They worked together, those two, father and son. Whenever one task was finished, another was immediately at hand. And though through the years the father never criticized overly much, still words of praise never came from his lips.

Until ~~the~~ one day the father died. No there were no final words, I'm proud of you son, no I never told you but you have been such a fine son to me, only silence.

I suppose the son might have been free then. He might have been able to look at his life with his father and say, "What's done is done, no sense looking back. But the longing for the love of his father was now more intense with the Father unable to give it. And all the demands and expectations, all the striving and driving and doing to please a man who could not be pleased caused him to lose control. And the pills of the psychologists and the psychiatrists still could not bring the words to his ears, Good job son.

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From the outside, for the vantage point of one looking on from a distance, it was all such a senseless tragedy. All the son needed to do was let go, open his ears to other voices. Many were saying to him, Good job but he could not hear, for his ears were only tuned to hear one who could no longer speak.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Did you hear that? Dare you believe it? For yourself?

No condemnation. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has

set me free from the law of sin and death.

What is the law, God's law? It is a father who never says, Godd job son. The law is a taskmaster that never allows us to stop for the day. The law is a whip that drives us and drives us until we are insane.

Take one of the law's favorite words, should. Does your heart know how to whisper that word. You should try harder, you should give more, you should be a better parent, a better son or daughter. Whenever that word should slips into a sentence then it is the law speaking in our heart, demanding like a father who never has a woord of praise.

Through Saul God says to us, Christ has set you free from the law. In the seventh chapter of Romans Paul writes, now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.

Let me tell you of something that happened this past week that illustrates the difference betwee life under the law ans life in the Spirit.

I received a phone call for food. A woman was hungry. Immediately should got hold of me. I should help her. So I said I would. And now this hungry woman was a problem in my life. Should I give her food, or should I give her money? Should I tell her to seek a job, invite her to worship? What should I do?

You know, I began to resent her. This hungry woman. She was interfering with the smooth operation of my life. I wanted to do what was right but did not know what was right.

I went to see her. And now the problem became a person, a person who needed something I could give. Should seemed all the wrong word now. She did not want what I felt coerced to giveshe simply wanted to be treated like a human being. Not for the sake of some rule or law, but for her sake.

Certainly God desires that we love one another, and treat one another decently. But not as a means to an end, not I will love you so God will love me, but simply people to people being brothers and sisters to one another.

There is ~~now~~ therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. God has acted in Jesus Christ to free us from every demand of the law, to silence all the shoulds. In Holy Baptism God has poured his spirit into our hearts that we might be filled in the very way that he is full, with love.

The law ~~and~~ ^{with} its insistent demands is behind us. Yet so often we ~~like~~ are like that son whose Father had died, still looking for our approval from where it can never be found. Many of us live our lives in the realm of the shoulds, letting what we should do, rather than the spirit of God rule in us.

This is life in the flesh, when we look to ourselves rather than to the Spirit of God. When that woman called I filled my mind with me, what I must do, how I might respond. Is God so weak and puny that he will not have his way if I do not make the right decision? Or will he work his will in that woman and in me even though I fail to speak the right words, do the right things? If you speak the wrong words to your neighbor, is not God more powerful than sin, was he not able to bring about blessing even through the evil of people killing his son? ^{→ on earth Jesus the man of the including us, our country, his act have the power of his forgiveness in.} God can turn the world upside down, look at Paul St. Paul, one day enemy of the church and of Christ, the next Christ's most faithful servant. Why ~~now~~ should we be afraid, living our lives in guilt and fear? There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the spirit is life and peace. For 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. Why not? because when we trust in ourselves we do not allow God to be our God.

But you are not in the flesh, you are in the spirit. The Spirit of God dwells in you who are baptized and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Live ~~then~~ as a people set free, set free to love and to give and to forgive. Begin no deed in fear nor in guilt, but begin every deed in prayer and in faith, and the spirit of the almighty God will do his work in you and through you.

Finally in our text we have this promise: If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus Christ from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you. This is what no condemnation means, that as God conquered death in Jesus Christ, he will raise up our bodies also. Through faith God is at work to conquer sin and death in our lives day after day and at the last day he will show us that the victory has been ours in Christ Jesus all along.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
Amen.