

Daniel Waldschmidt – 3rd article – 7/24/16

Last week we talked about how the Holy Spirit works in us holy faith in our hearts. Today we are going to talk about how the Holy Spirit works holy action in our lives.

Today we are going to talk about good works. And good works can be a tricky subject to talk about because we know that good works do not save us. Ephesians 2:8-9 says that “it is by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works so that no one can boast.” So we know that we are not saved by good works. But then the devil will try to get us to think that since we are not saved by good works, good works are not important, or, even worse, the devil might try to get us to think that good works are optional.

Why is it difficult to live a life that avoids sin and does good all the time? It’s difficult because we still have a sinful nature, our passage calls it “our flesh.” And the flesh is not just our skin and bones but the flesh includes the sinful mind and the sinful heart. That sinful part of us is opposed to God’s law. One summer when I was in college, I worked at a cheese factory. I worked the night shift and every night we would have to shut down all the machines and I remember every night we had to pressure wash the inside and outside of all the vats. We had to use some very powerful chemicals. When I was being trained the person who was training me showed me two big canisters of chemicals. And he said to me: “Never mix these two chemicals together. Because if you mix these chemicals together, it makes mustard gas.” When your sinful nature comes into contact with God’s holy law, there is a disastrous effect. Because you see God’s law is holy and righteous and good. It says “Obey me!” And our sinful natures don’t like being told what to do and so our sinful natures break God’s law. But you see God’s law has a curse built into it, when a person transgresses the law that effects the curse. So our sinful nature and God’s law are like those two chemicals coming together. God’s law makes our sinful nature want to sin more and that enacts the Law’s curse. It’s like those two chemicals coming together and having a disastrous effect. How do we escape this disastrous situation? The only way is to die and come back to life again.

And that is exactly what has happened to each one of you. Our passage says that you died to “the law through the body of Christ.” You see the law pronounced a curse on us, but Christ in his body took that curse on himself. And we also have died. The Bible says that when you were baptized you died with Jesus. In baptism you died with Jesus. And in baptism you also came out of the tomb with Jesus. And when you came out of the tomb you were a whole new creation. Now you have a new nature. Your new nature is not like your flesh. Your flesh hated God’s law. When it came into contact with God’s law, it made mustard gas. But this new nature has God’s law written all around inside of it. Your new nature is like a scroll with God’s law written in it. The Bible says I will write my law in their minds and on their hearts. That means that keeping God’s law is a part of you. It’s as natural as breathing.

Last summer we walked through the 10 commandments. Your new nature wants to keep God’s law. It doesn’t want to have any other Gods. It doesn’t want to misuse God’s name or neglect God’s Word. Your new nature wants to honor your parents. It doesn’t hate but rather helps our neighbor in need. James said, **“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”** The Holy Spirit works holy faith and from holy faith springs holy action. Your new

nature wants to help the neighbor in need. Your new nature certainly does not want to commit sexual immorality. The Bible says that God did not call us to be impure but to live a holy life. Your new nature does not want to steal or ruin someone else's reputation. Your new nature is content and does not covet. Your new nature has the law of God written on it so that keeping God's law is just as natural as breathing.

And you might say, "Pastor, it doesn't feel that way sometimes." That's because your sinful nature, even though its power has been broken, it still clings to you. But the law can't condemn you because Jesus exhausted its curse in his body when he died.

And yes, sin keeps coming back to us. But we don't belong to sin anymore. We belong to Jesus. I'm going to read our passage again and I'm also going to read the verses before it too. Our passage says: **"So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God." (Romans 7:4).** When sin comes around and sin says to you, "You have to do what I say." You can say to sin: "You don't own me anymore. I belong to another." And Jesus has given us a sign and a token to remind us that we belong to him: And that token is our baptism. Actually it's more than a sign and token, it contains all of Jesus love. At our baptism we died and our connection to sin. It means we do not belong to sin anymore. Instead we belong to Jesus. Our baptism is like a wedding ring to remind us that we belong to Jesus. And when sin comes around, we can look at our wedding ring and remind ourselves: I belong to Jesus. Sin doesn't own me anymore. Or we could even show that wedding ring to sin and say: "See, you don't own me anymore. I belong to a Savior who loves me and gave himself for me and I live for him now."

"that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God." Now that we belong to Jesus his powerful Spirit fills our hearts and we bear fruit for God. The first lesson talked about the fruit of the Spirit: those are the good fruit which the Spirit produces in our lives. ²² **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,** ²³ **gentleness and self-control.** Two things I want you to notice about this list. The first is "joy." This fruit of the Spirit is an attitude. I can be optimistic because my Savior loves me. The other thing to notice about this lists it that most of them have to do with how we treat other people. The Holy Spirit changes our relationships with other people, with all people but especially with our brothers and sisters within the body of Christ.

At the beginning of the sermon I quoted Ephesians 2:8-9 "It is by grace you have been saved through faith – and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast." That passage goes on to say, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Ephesians 2:10) Have you ever has a project that you have been working on for a really long time. Maybe it was a project around the house. Or maybe you were working on your car for a really long time. Whatever it was you were really proud of it. You are the painting that God has been working on. You are God's creation. He's proud of his work. And he created you to do good works. The Spirit works holy action. Amen.