


Madison Heights Christian Church 
(Disciples of Christ)
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MADISON HEIGHTS MESSENGER

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Live by the Spirit

Sometime after he founded the church in Galatia, the Apostle Paul found out that his work was being undermined. So, he wrote the urgent letter to the Galatians to address the crisis there. In the letter Paul is blunt, hard hitting, and speaks as a matter of fact. There are two competing concepts that are opposed to each other. You either live by the Spirit or you live by the flesh. This is an "either/or" concept that runs throughout the Bible. It is the same problem from the beginning; the will of God versus the desire of humanity. To live by the Spirit is a frequent lesson of the Bible. The same problem exists over, and over, and over again in the Bible; to live by my way or to live God's way is the same root problem repeated with different specifics.

The Problem that the apostle Paul faced is that there were people who emphasized obedience to the Law of Moses. Now let's stop and think about this. To obey the Law of Moses is good. We have the Law of Moses because it is in the Bible. We teach obedience to the Law of Moses. We know the 10 commandments because Christians teach them to us. So, what is that apostle Paul up to in writing this letter about a problem with obedience to the law? Paul's theology is based on the gospel of grace. The Pharisees were strict legalists and ignored human need. Legalism runs contrary to love; the more strict, the less loving. A human being is in a right relationship with God through love. It is because God loved the world that we see the faithfulness of Christ to face the cross. Righteousness is a result of the Lord's redemption, not through obedience to a code of law. It is the redemptive death of Christ that brings salvation to us. It is not anything that we have done or can do other than accepting God's gracious action.

The Apostle Paul understood that it is the cross that liberates us. It is the cross that confirms our status as children of God. Therefore, as God's children, we produce fruit that is pleasing to God. It is the same story, same theme, same song and dance, as many other Bible lessons. You are either ruled by love or ruled by the law. When ruled by law, obedience is regulated by the fear of punishment. When ruled by love, obedience comes naturally due to respect, honor, and appreciation. We are one in Jesus, bound together by love and faith. This loving relationship does not need the kind of things that separate us, such as rituals and circumcision. We are free from restrictions. This is all because of the saving work of God, in Christ, by Christ, and through Christ. We live by the power of the Holy Spirit; it leads and guides us towards a natural obedience to the will of God. Being governed by love is a very pleasant experience and does not need forceful regulation. When rules are emphasized and obedience is conscripted, it negates the sufficiency of God's grace. It is the cross - not the law - that brings us into a righteous relationship with God. The reconciling power of God brings us all together.

The death of God's Son on the cross changes everything. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that guides the life of the faithful. The Scripture is not about sin bashing and shaming. The Scripture promotes living by the Spirit. The struggle of the Christian life is daily. What does God desire of me? There is internal and everlasting satisfaction that comes from living by the Spirit.

Thank you,

George