

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

“Beware the leaven of the Pharisees and the Saducees”, the Lord exhorts. Leaven silently, invisibly invades the whole lump. It puffs up. It changes the very substance of the mass of dough. The Lord, as the disciples would later understand, was referring to false doctrine, to the theological positions of the Pharisees and Saducees.

They had the Word of God. But they taught it wrongly. They believed that they could keep the Law, and so earn God’s favor. They believed that through their own works and lives they could make themselves holy. And made careers out of teaching others the same.

St. Paul was one of those teachers – student of Gamaliel, Pharisee of Pharisees. But St. Paul, by God’s grace, was brought to a right understanding of the Word of God. He put out the leaven, that he could speak the saving Word of the Holy Gospel by God’s Call and Ordination.

So you who have flesh, you who have sinned, you who have need of a Savior, hear St. Paul: There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

The Law was not weak of itself. It is the Word of God, it is perfect and holy. The Law, the Apostle writes, was weak through the flesh. What the Law could not do, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. Those who live according to the flesh set their minds no the things of the

flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

So here we have it: clearly, in Holy Scripture, the proper distinction between Law and Gospel, and the articulation of the different functions of the Law.

When a man is born anew by the Spirit of God, and liberated from the Law, that is, freed from this driver, and is led by the Spirit of Christ, he lives according to the immutable will of God comprised in the Law, and insofar as he is born from above, he does everything from a free, cheerful spirit. What the Apostle describes are not properly the works of the Law, but the fruits of the Spirit.

So the image of God, lost in the fall, is restored by the indwelling of God’s Spirit. The knowledge of God’s will, and the ability to sinlessly act on that will, are impossible for fallen man. But when the Spirit of God fills a man, He brings with Him a perfect knowledge of God’s will, and the power to lead a man in the way that God has set down in advance for him.

Have you walked according to the flesh, or according to the Spirit? Ask yourself: have all your works, all your thoughts, all your actions been pure and holy? Or have you silently disparaged others in your heart? Have you sincerely put the best construction on the words and actions of others, building others up and counting them as good? Or have you been suspicious, parsing their words, looking for evil motivation, doubting their intentions?

Have you been so consumed with love of self that love of neighbor, not to mention love of God, have fallen by the wayside?

Repent. *Lex semper accusat.* The Law is given to restrain the sin you have exhibited. The Law is given to show you your sins. So see your sins in the Law's stony Words, see your sins in the bright Mirror of God's Law, and hear your sentence: To be carnally minded is death. Repent.

But take heart. For what the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, that the righteous requirement of the Law be fulfilled. But more, this He did for you. And His righteousness does more than hover about as a nebula, academic theological assertion. His righteousness is applied to you, personally and individually, that you be saved. For to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

His Blood, the Blood He poured out at Calvary, washes you. By it, the salvation Christ earned for the world is made your salvation. By His death, He removes your sins. And in the Divine Washing that covers you with Christ's righteousness, you are brought to new life by God's Spirit, who fills you. For the same Christ who died for you rose to new life, fulfilling the Promised Sign of the Prophet Jonah. So the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has made you free from the Law of sin and death.

So this day, by the Spirit, you set your mind on the things of the Spirit. You hear God's Word, the Word that works and strengthens faith. You receive Absolution, the public proclamation that your sins are forgiven in Christ. And spiritually minded, you hunger for the Gifts God brings to this altar this day, Gifts He gives you, personally and individually, as Christ is placed in your mouth and poured across your lips.

You hear, believe, eat and drink, and for you there is no condemnation, for yours is the life and peace of all those in Christ Jesus, those born from above of the Holy Spirit, those Christ has won, His chaste and spotless Bride. For He does not speak to you of bread, but of pure doctrine, of the saving Gospel, and of a heavenly eating by which He gives you Paradise.

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