

A podcast I listen to records a conversation between two middle-aged men talking about anything and everything. Having listened to about 500 episodes over the course of a decade, I feel like I've really gotten to know these two men. In one such episode, the costar John said that his wife would often go on business trips. Sometimes John would go along with their daughter and sightsee in the new place they were visiting. Needless to say, this caused tension because the wife couldn't go with them, and she was often spending long hours in conference rooms or in the hotel giving and preparing presentations.

The father and his daughter were going to the same location as the wife, they rode in the same car or flew in the same plane. They slept in the same hotel room. However, the father and daughter had a very different experience heading to the destination, staying at the hotel, and returning home than the wife who rarely saw outside the walls of the conference center.

As we wrap up our sermon series: Road Trip, we'll look forward to how we can live as Christians. The first week discussed the role of God's Law in showing us our sin ultimately showing our need for a Savior. Last week we discussed how as long as we live, our sinful flesh will struggle against obeying God's law, even if the Holy Spirit inside us delights in such a prospect.

This week is where the rubber meets the road, we're shifting gears from life under the law to live life by the Spirit. God's law is clear, and it reflects how the world works and how He wants us to act. No matter what, we are called to follow the will of God. What changes is our motivation for following the Lord.

The analogy ties in that it's much like the father's trip with his daughter and wife. The father and daughter are on a family vacation, but the wife is on a business trip. Life by the law and life by the spirit may claim to take you to the same place, and they may both look very similar, but they are a night and day difference. LIFE BY THE SPIRIT IS A FAMILY RATHER THAN A BUSINESS.

First, I. Life by the flesh is all business. Paul writes in Romans 8, "**So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.**" Paul warns us against living life according to the flesh. That means living life apart from God, living as though only you matter and nothing else.

Of course, those who live life according to the flesh don't act like wild animals. They are civilized. Many are nice. Some are even nicer than you are. Likely there are many in our town who have no connection to the Church who give a larger percentage of their paycheck to secular charitable causes, who log more community service hours, and who do more to help those in need than me or you.

Of course, we can applaud their efforts and appreciate their contributions to our community. But the Bible reminds us "...**without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists**

and that he rewards those who seek him.” Without God you live life by the flesh, that is, life according to our own abilities and power. But when we live life like that, we ultimately fail.

Even the most world-renowned philanthropist has a twinge of selfish pride when he writes the million-dollar check to cancer research. When we live life according to the flesh, it's all business. We're looking to earn our place or even to prove ourselves worthy.

But this way of life eventually wears on you. Either you lower the bar and say that whatever you do is good enough, or you live under the constant suspicion that you're never measuring up.

One pastor mentioned that the crisis of this generation is that we've ditched an absolute moral code, and we've written our own. But even then, we can't follow our own rules! Paul writes, **“For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”** The end result of life according to the flesh is death.

Imagine the two different mindsets of John and his daughter compared to his wife. On the plane ride, father and daughter can plan different destinations for when they arrive at the new place. On the other hand, the mother has to finalize Powerpoint decks and answer emails. The mother is anxious about how her presentation will be received and if her business will grow. John and daughter enjoy museums and historical sites. Life by the flesh is all business, and it can be draining. Eventually, the wife asked John not to take their daughter on these business trips because she became too jealous of missing out on the fun they were having.

If life by the flesh is a business trip, then life by the spirit is a family vacation. II. Life by the Spirit is a family matter. Paul continues, **“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,”** Our place in life is not determined by our ability to do good or to prove ourselves through our actions, but through our place in the family.

A family vacation is usually well-earned. Dad and mom have worked hard the other 51 weeks of the year, setting aside money and earning vacation days. What did the kids do to earn it? Nothing! They simply get to go along for the ride. John from my podcast even pulled his daughter out of school for a week so she could learn new things on a vacation in a country she's never been to before.

Through baptism, you have put on Christ, and you are part of God's family, and it's all been paid for and you don't have to do anything to earn it. Jesus Christ has already earned your salvation and reserved your position in the community that is the Church. He suffered in your place on the cross. He took your sins to Calvary.

He rose again on the third day showing that God no longer counts your sins against you, and that His sacrifice for sin was complete.

And so, we live life by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit was given to you at your baptism, and He does His work as the Word of God resonates in your ears and in your heart. He makes His home with you as you are fed by Jesus' body and blood in the bread and wine of communion.

Life by the Spirit is not one of fear. “Am I good enough?” “Am I really part of God's family?” “Do others like me?” All these are life by the flesh questions. Instead, perfect love casts out fear. As sons and daughters of God we cry “Abba, Father!” That is, “Daddy!”

On a family road trip, perhaps we worry whether dad is going to turn around the car or that we may be excluded from a certain activity if we misbehave, but we don't worry whether we're still a son or daughter by the time we get back home.

Take heart, dear Christian friend, your place in God's family is certain. You are part of His family, and you no longer need to earn your position. Just enjoy the family vacation.

Nonetheless, III. Sons & daughters live to please their Father. Paul continues, “**and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.**” It is from our identity as Christians that action flows.

Dear Christian, you are a Christian, so live like one. The Holy Spirit equips you to do this. Yes, as Paul details, it does involve suffering just as Christ suffered. Part of what this might look like is identifying as a Christian and a Christ-follower even when it is inconvenient or may bring persecution. It involves not taking part in the deeds of darkness that happen all around us.

It also means living out our Christian calling: knowing what the Lord demands of us to do in the Ten Commandments, reflecting on them, and asking for forgiveness where we fail to keep them. It involves devotion to God's Word through daily Scripture readings and prayer. Jesus calls us to make worship the excuse for missing sports, fishing, or brunch, not vice versa.

All of this we do not as though it were a business trip with things to check off the list and to keep our boss off our back. Rather, we do this as though it were a family vacation. The Holy Spirit works in our hearts to make these things a joy, and not a burden. This may happen gradually, but we do these things out of a desire to please our Heavenly Father, not to make it into the family but because we already are.

Wherever your road may take you this summer, know that you are called to walk in the way of Jesus, and this truly is a joy.