

## Romans – Session 17

We left off with the start of chapter 8 last time – we concluded with St. Paul’s stunning and poignant sharing of his own inability to live a holy life. In chapter 7: vs-15-25 Paul admits – “he does the very things he knows he should not do, and he doesn’t do the very things he knows he should do”. He admits he is a slave to sin, and sin is his master. This is such a remarkable and amazing admission of contrition, that we would do well to read it again. (read 7:15-25).

Now we turn to chapter 8. Lets begin by reading 8:1-17 (read). Chapter 8 is often called: “ The Holy Spirit in the believer” It is one of the great chapters in the New Testament. It speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit, God’s power to overcome sin, the issue Paul has just confessed his weakness to in chapter 7. Paul seeks, as we all should seek, “the new life in Christ”, which opens the door for us to live above our shortcomings.

Vs. 1 – Paul says – “for those who are in Christ, there is no longer any condemnation”. The Law and Sin are no longer the measure, the yard stick of how a holy God will judge us. God has acted decisively by sending His Son, by sending Himself, to take upon Himself, my sin and yours. As hard as it is for us to believe, Jesus has substituted himself to take upon himself, our just condemnation. Or as Paul said in II Corinthians 5:21 – “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God”. That verse says it all about our new status in Christ.

Doesn’t this make you wonder why so many people today reject such an offer? Daniel Boyle works in the prison system. He is not with us this morning, but if he was, I would ask him this question: If I walked into the prison system on any given day and said to anyone incarcerated there, “hey I love you and I want to take your place and you can be free today”, do you think the prisoners would accept my offer? I think so. But the radical truth of the Gospel, is that “in Christ” there is no longer any condemnation. The catch of course is that people must be “in Christ”.

Vs. 2 – Paul says – The law of the spirit of life in Christ sets us free from the law of sin and death. The Holy Spirit is the giver of Life. It is the work of the Holy Spirit which enables us to say: “Jesus is Lord” – I Corinthians 12:3 – “no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit”. Each of us has come to faith through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, whether we know it or not. So in chapter 8:vs 2 Paul is saying the Holy Spirit leads us to belief and it is in believing that we are set free from sin and our bondage to it, which without Christ and belief brings condemnation to sin, and death. The Holy Spirit gives us the power within ourselves to overcome our sin, even as the battle to live our lives differently is often a fierce battle. Our old habits die hard.

Vs. 3 – God did for us, what the Law could not do. God sent His Son, in the flesh, to condemn sin. The failure of the Law to lead us to righteousness is due to the weakness of our flesh. Now in Christ, we can walk not in the way of the flesh, but with the Holy Spirit.

Vs. 4 – The just requirements of the Law are fulfilled in us, solely because of what Jesus did for us. Now we can set our lives not in accordance with the flesh, but in harmony with the life of the Holy Spirit. We can set our minds on the things of God.

Vs. 5 – We now have a choice in life. WE can set our minds on the things of the flesh, or we can set our minds on the things of the Holy Spirit. Life is now a matter of what we choose. And what we choose will not only determine our eternal destiny, it will determine our fulfillment and joy in this life.

Vs. 6 – Paul gets rather blunt. He says: “to set the mind on the flesh is death” “To set the mind on the Holy Spirit is life and peace”. It is that clear, that black and white to Paul. Paul is right – when the things of God dominate our outlook, when one is constantly responsive to the direction of the Holy Spirit, then there is new life and peace. We are free to live joyously.

Vs. 7 – The mind set upon the flesh is hostile to God! The mind set upon the flesh is unable to obey the Law, because it can’t. It is too difficult a thing to do.

Vs. 8 – And so those centered in the flesh cannot please God.

Vs. 9 – Paul says to the church in Rome – “you however are not in the flesh, you are in the Holy Spirit.” Perhaps we should reflect for a moment on how black and white Paul seems to speak of the difference between believers and non-believers. What do you think? Is your life in Christ that clearly devoid of the struggles of the flesh? Is that because we vacillate and are caught between the values of the world and the goal of the spiritual life?

I think we are never free from the assaults of the world, the flesh and the devil. What we can say with certainty is this: IF you and I truly are living our lives “in Christ” and we allow Jesus Christ to live within us, we can be and we will be changed for good. It will not be easy to replace our worldly pursuits, to pursue and seek the Kingdom of God. It will not be easy to do what God tells us we must do – die to self – to start living for others. But once we discover that God’s ways are the ways to fulfillment, it becomes easier each day, it becomes more joyous and fun each day, and we learn what it means to “thirst for God” every moment of every day. Paul concludes Vs. 9 with the words: “Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ, does not belong to Him” These are powerful and sobering words. The word “Spirit” is capitalized. Paul is referring to the Holy Spirit. None of us can have and live out Jesus Spirit on our own. But when we are blessed with the Holy Spirit, we can and do **belong to Jesus Christ**.

Vs. 10 – IF Christ is in you, though your bodies are dead because of your sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness. IF the Holy Spirit is in you, then Jesus Christ is in you.

Vs. 11 – Paul relates the Holy Spirit to the work of the heavenly Father. This whole entirety of chapter 8 of Romans is very Trinitarian, though the theological doctrine of the Trinity was not agreed upon to describe God until the 4<sup>th</sup> Century. Paul is saying, that not only did God the Father and the Holy Spirit raise Jesus from the dead, but if the Holy Spirit dwells within you, he will give life to your mortal body, through His Holy Spirit which dwells in you.

Vs. 12-17 – Paul speaks about the family of God. Paul is saying – the Holy Spirit does not make slaves of us, He makes Sons of us! Vs. 15 – You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into sin, fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. We can now cry: Abba! Father, a term of endearment, we by God’s grace can call God “Daddy”. This is remarkable. God is approachable because we are his family. We are His sons and daughters.

Vs. 16 – 17 - The Holy Spirit, working in concert with our human spirit, bears witness that we are children of God, and if children then heirs with God the Father and with Christ. Provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

We will pick up here next time