

It is more profitable to know Jesus than to know about Him.

Weekly Edition – April 3, 2015 - Good Friday

Paul's Letter to the Romans

Life Through the Spirit

⁸ Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

⁵ Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶ The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. ¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

¹² Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.

¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "*Abba, Father.*" ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

God Sent His Own Son to be a Sin Offering

- 1) The law could not *defeat* sin; it could only *detect* sin. Only Jesus can *defeat* sin, and He did that through His work on the Cross.
- 2) In order to defeat sin, Jesus had to identify with those bound by it, by coming in the *likeness* of sinful flesh. Jesus was not sinful flesh, like you and me, but He identified with it entirely.
 - a) *God made Him (Jesus) who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.* (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Outline of Romans

1. **Paul's credentials**
(1:1-1:18)
2. **Justification by Faith (1:18-11:36)**
 - a. **Sin – the "need" for Salvation**
 - 1) of Gentiles (1:18-2:16)
 - 2) of Jews (2:17-3:8)
 - 3) universal need for Salvation (3:9-20)
 - b. **Justification by Faith - the "Provision" made for Salvation**
 - 1) God's Righteousness through Faith (3:21-31)
 - 2) Abraham as an Example (4:1-25)
 - c. **Freedom - the "Result" of Salvation**
 - 1) Freedom from Wrath (5:1-21)
 - 2) Freedom from Sin (6:1-23)
 - 3) Freedom from The Law (7:1-25)
 - 4) Freedom from Death (8:1-39)
 - d. **Jew and Gentile - The "Scope" of Salvation**
 - 1) God chooses to save Believers (9:1-33)
 - 2) Israel trusted their own Righteousness (10:1-21)
 - 3) Jew and Gentile can have Salvation through Faith (11:1-36)
3. **The Transformed Life (12:1-15:13)**
 - a. In relation to overall conduct (12:1-21)
 - b. In relation to civil authority (13:1-7)
 - c. In relation to fellow man (13:8-14)
 - d. In relation to weak brethren in the Body of Christ (14:1-15:13)
4. **Concluding remarks, instructions and benediction (15:14-16:27)**

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- 3) The righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us, not because of us, but because of Jesus.
 - a) Jesus Said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." (Matthew 5:17) Elsewhere He said, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." (Luke 24:44)
 - b) Jesus fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law, and because we are in Christ, we also fulfill the law through identification with Jesus by faith.
 - i) The law is fulfilled in us in regard to *obedience*, because Jesus' righteousness stands for ours.
 - ii) The law is fulfilled in us in regard to *punishment*, because any punishment demanded by the law was poured out upon Jesus on the Cross. He paid the penalty for you and me.
- 4) Jesus is our substitute. Jesus was treated as a sinner so we can be treated as righteous.
 - a) Jesus was pre-figured as *substitute* when God provided the ram to Abraham to sacrifice in place of Isaac.
 - b) Jesus was pre-figured as *sacrifice* when each year the Passover Seder is celebrated. It recalls God's sparing the children of Israel when the angel of death swept over the first-born of Egypt.
 - c) Jesus was pre-figured as *atonement* in the annual celebration of Yom Kippur, the holiest day for Israel, when the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies and sacrifice on behalf of the sins of the people of Israel.
- 5) On Good Friday, we celebrate and remember Christ's act of love on the Cross. We recall that when He breathed His last, the curtain in the temple that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was torn in two. It symbolizes the access to heaven opened for sinners by Christ Jesus, and also symbolizes the rent of garment's associated with profound expressions of grief in Jewish tradition – in this case, grief of our Heavenly Father at turning His back on His Son as payment for the guilt of the sin of man.

Therefore There is No Condemnation

- 1) The unequivocal declaration of *no condemnation* comes to those who are in Christ Jesus.
 - a) Since the Father does not condemn Jesus, neither can He condemn those are *in* Him.
 - i) We *are* not condemned, we *will* not be condemned, and we *cannot* be condemned! This is the Good News of the Gospel. What we could not do for ourselves, Jesus did for us! All we have to do is accept Jesus by faith!
- 2) The verdict is *not* "less condemnation." Sometimes we slip into thinking that our standing has *improved* in Jesus. It hasn't improved; it's been *completely transformed*, changed to "no condemnation!"
 - a) Consider the flip side: If you are *not* in Christ Jesus, and are walking after the flesh, you have not escaped from condemnation – you *are* condemned!
- 3) Now Paul looks to Jesus and he finds his standing in Him.
 - a) Romans 8 begins with *no condemnation*; it ends with *no separation*, and in between there is *no defeat*.
- 4) We don't receive "no condemnation" because we don't *deserve* it; we certainly *do* deserve condemnation. We receive it because Jesus bore the condemnation we deserved, and our identity is now found in Him. As He is condemned no more, neither are we.

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Contrasting the Life of the Spirit and the Life of the Flesh

- 1) The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.
 - a) The law of the sin and death was a strong and seemingly absolute law. Every sin we commit and every cemetery we see proves it.
 - b) But the law of the Spirit of life in Christ is stronger still, and the law of the Spirit frees us from the law of sin and death.
- 2) We are free from the law of sin. Though the Christian inevitably does sin, the Christian does not *have* to sin, because he is freed from sin's dominion. We are free from the law of death; death no longer has any lasting power against the believer.
- 3) Romans 8:1 tells us that, in Christ, we are free from the *guilt* of sin. Romans 8:2 tells us, in Christ, we are free from the *power* of sin.
 - a) The law can do many things. It can guide us, teach us, and tell us about God's character.
 - b) But the law cannot give energy to our flesh; it can give us the standard, but it cannot give us the power to live pleasing to God.

An Easy Litmus Test

- 1) Paul gives an easy way for us to determine if we walk in the Spirit or walk in the flesh: Where is my *mind* set?
 - a) The mind is the strategic battleground where the flesh and the Spirit fight. Is my mind (my thoughts) concerned about the things of God (i.e. the Spirit) or the things of the flesh (i.e. carnal concerns)?
 - i) When our minds are set on the things of the flesh (carnally minded) we bring death into our lives. But walking in the Spirit brings life and peace. If you are unsure – try it! Try a 30-day experiment of prayer – ask God every day for 30 days to help you live with your thoughts tuned to God. See what happens!
 - b) Don't think of those who set their minds on the things of the flesh are only notorious sinners.
 - i) Peter meant well when he told Jesus to avoid the Cross. Jesus responded to Peter with these strong words: "*you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.*" (Matthew 16:23)
- 2) Christians are empowered to live in the Spirit.
 - a) The Holy Spirit is given to each believer when they are born again. As Christians we have within us a powerful ally, mediator and advocate – our life of sanctification is learning how to tap this power for victorious living in Jesus Christ; and this is proved out in the reality of our daily circumstances.
 - b) Now if I do not have the Spirit of Christ, I am not His. (Romans 8:9)
 - i) This means that every believer has the Holy Spirit. It is a misnomer to divide Christians among the "Spirit-filled" and the "non-Spirit-filled." If a person is not filled with the Holy Spirit, they are not a Christian at all.
 - c) Do not confuse this with a believer missing out on living the Christian life in the constant fullness of the Spirit. Many Christians have no experience of what Jesus spoke about when He described rivers of living water flowing from the believer (John 7:37-39). They are not constantly being filled with the Holy Spirit as Paul spoke about in Ephesians 5:18. The way into this fullness is to become a person of prayer. Prayer is to our spiritual life what recharging the batteries is to cell phone life. No juice, no life.

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How do I know that I have the Spirit?

- 1) Ask these questions:
 - a) Has the Spirit led me to Jesus?
 - b) Has the Spirit put in me the desire to honor Jesus with my life?
 - c) Is the Spirit leading me to be more like Jesus?
 - d) Is the Spirit at work in my heart?
- 2) If the Spirit of Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, even though I may go on sinning.
 - a) Since Jesus lives in us, the old man (body) is dead; the Spirit lives and reigns.
 - b) Not only are we in Christ (Romans 8:1), but He is also in us, and because God cannot abide a sinful home, the body (old man) had to die when Jesus came in.

A Mind Hostile to God

- 1) The flesh battles against God, because it does not want to be crucified and surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - a) It does not want to live out Galatians 5:24, *"those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."*
 - i) In this battle to tame the flesh, the law is powerless. Success requires God's Spirit supplying His life within me.
- 2) Paul didn't say that the carnal mind was at enmity with God - he put it even stronger than that.
 - a) The carnal mind is enmity against God.
 - i) It is not black, but blackness;
 - ii) It is not at enmity, but enmity itself;
 - iii) It is not corrupt, but corruption;
 - iv) It is not rebellious, it is rebellion;
 - v) It is not wicked, it is wickedness itself.
- 3) Hence, we can try to do "good" in life without being in Jesus Christ, but it doesn't work.
 - a) We may wrongfully hope to put God "in debt" to us by doing good works (being a "good" person) apart from a life grounded in faith. But it doesn't work. In the flesh we cannot please God, even if the flesh is doing religious things that are admired by men. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.
 - b) Without Christ, all my designs about being a "good person" are absolutely and totally worthless. Without Jesus, I am condemned.
- 4) This freedom from death is the fourth benefit of our life in Christ. More on this next week.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Have I put my whole life in God's hands, accepting Jesus as my Lord and Savior?
- 2) How has my life changed as a result of putting my faith in God?
- 3) In what ways does the old self still assert itself against the life Christ in me?
- 4) Jesus didn't deserve the Cross, but He patiently endured its agony and shame for you and me. Is there something hard in my life right now that I don't deserve? What can I learn from the Cross?