

Romans

Romans Chapter Eight

Romans 8:3-4

September 12, 2010

This is lesson number 57 in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

Romans 1:16-17

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

“ON ACCOUNT OF SIN”

Romans 8:1-4

8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, [who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.] **2** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made you [me] free from the law of sin and death.

3 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, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, **4** that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

God willing today we will conclude this major section in the Book of Romans on the Law of God. This section began at 7:1 and continues through 8:4. It has been my burden in these studies to try to understand for myself and to explain to you what the Law of God can and cannot do.

Ever since Adam tried to cover his shame with his fig-leaf righteousness and blood had to be shed to teach him the doctrine of Substitution; when Cain offered the work of his hands and God rejected his offering because blood had to be shed. It is the blood that makes the atonement for sin and it is only the blood of Christ that God will accept as propitiation for sin!

The law cannot make a man right or just before God: Romans 3:20

Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

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That simply means that no system of works of obedience, not even the holy and just and good law of God, can make a man right in the sight of God. The only righteousness that God recognizes is in His own Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

All that the law of God was ever meant do is to give the knowledge of sin and by Grace convict a man of sin. Sin uses the law to arouse the passions of the flesh in us. When the Holy Spirit in a sovereign act of grace convicts a man of sin and guilt and then leads that man to Christ that man will be born again. The cause and the necessity of the new birth is a missing note in most preaching today.

You cannot get to Christ through keeping the law but neither can you get to Christ by ignoring the law. The law will do its work when God the Holy Spirit gives you the knowledge of sin.

Can we, through faith, do away with the law? No!
The believer is dead to the law but the law is not dead.

The Apostle says in Romans 3:31:

Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not!

On the contrary, we establish the law.

That simply means that the law of God remains in force over a man unless and until God grants that man grace and mercy where by grace through faith alone that man is passes from death unto life, from darkness unto light in Christ Jesus.

If we do not have revealed to us by God the spiritual nature of the law we will never know how far we have fallen in sinful rebellion against a holy God. Until we are given the grace to understand that the law is spiritual we will be trapped in the letter of the law and cannot be aware of and will not live in the newness of the Spirit.

So in Chapter 7 we learned that the believer is dead to the law in order that he may be married to Christ. The believer is married to Christ in order that he may bear fruit unto God.

We invested five lessons discussing Romans 7:14-25 and considered the various interpretations of this often quoted passage of Scripture.

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We were cautioned several times that any preacher who is dogmatic about his interpretation of Romans 7:14-25 is not qualified to preach it.

After a fresh study of this passage I concluded that the best interpretation of Romans 7:14-25 is that given by Martyn Lloyd-Jones who stands nearly alone in this interpretation. This is not a description of a mature Christian as most people, including myself in years past, say it is. That is to say that this is the best it will ever be for a believer.

What L-J said was that Romans 7:14-25 is a hypothetical example of a man who tries to be sanctified by the law and finds that that is an impossible thing to do because that was never the purpose of the law. When a man tries to use the law in order to serve God he will cry out: "O wretched man..."

Obedience to the Law then is of no use when it comes to justification or for sanctification.

We saw that Chapters 6 & 7 is a parenthesis that explains that a believer is **dead to sin** and **dead to the law**. Do you really understand what it means to be dead to something? Whatever that something is it can have no power over you, you are dead to it! Paul uses the example of the woman who is under the law of her husband as long as he lives but who is free to marry another man when her husband dies. We are dead to the law in order that we may be married to Christ and being married to Christ we may bear fruit to God.

A believer is someone who is 'in Christ' by the work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth. **"You must be born again!"**

We said that verse 1 of Chapter 8 closes the parenthesis made by Chapters 6 & 7 and takes up from Romans 5:20-21:

Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, 21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Then Paul continues from 5:20-21 in verse 1 of Chapter 8 with that same great truth where we are told because of the reign of grace super abounds over sin:

'There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.'

There is **now** no judgment and no punishment for those who are 'in Christ.'

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Some years ago there was an article in the newspaper by a man who was arguing that a genuine believer could lose his salvation and finally be lost. I decided not to answer this man. Always ask yourself, “Do I answer a fool according to his folly or not answer a fool according to his folly?”

You must determine what kind of fool you are dealing with.

If Jesus has given you eternal life and tells you that you shall never perish and neither shall anyone pluck you out of His hand; if there is now no punishment for you because by faith you are ‘in Christ’ then you shouldn’t be too bothered by this man’s busy little newspaper article.

His position is the very **seed of legalism**, which rules by fear of losing your salvation. Do you trust Jesus Christ or will you trust your obedience?

Verse 2 of Chapter 8 is the way Paul restates 5:20; that grace super abounds over the reign of sin. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.”

When a person is ‘in Christ’ they are ‘free from the law of sin and death.’

We saw that ‘the ‘law of sin and death’ in verse 8:2 is the law of God.

If a person is dead to the law he is free from the law and its righteous requirement of perfection. Now before anyone thinks that being free from the law is a license to sin they must go back to Chapter 6 and be sure to read all of verse 4 in Chapter 8.

What the law could not do because it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.

We stressed that it is the **likeness** of sinful flesh, **not sinful flesh** but true humanity without the sin nature.

Our last lesson dealt with the incarnation of the Son of God.

‘**Incarnation,**’ God takes on human flesh but without sin.

Today I want to deal with the phrase, ‘**on account of sin,**’ or ‘for sin.’

The subject is the atonement. The reason that God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh was to be an offering for sin.

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Christ, the eternal Word, who was in the beginning with God and who is God became a man in the likeness of sinful flesh. It was man that sinned and man must be punished. Sin must be punished 'in the flesh.'

The only way that you or I can live as a true Christian is to firmly grasp this great truth. Christ has already done for us what God requires in His holy law. **We love Him because he first loved us.**

That kind of love will draw us to obedience and to walk in the Spirit. Our walk is our manner of life. Fear of death and dread of punishment cannot give you peace with God. You can never be sure that your obedience is good enough. But you can know that Christ satisfied the righteous requirement of the law. God's love not only can give you peace, it will give you peace.

John 17 records where Jesus prayed that those who were given to Him by the Father be sanctified [set apart for God's use] by the truth.
Are you interested in the truth?

Do you want to know that you have eternal life? Then you must know that you are 'in Christ.' Then you can have the assurance of Romans 8:33-34:

33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

This phrase 'on account of sin,' or 'for sin,' means 'atonement for sin.'

We won't go into all of the proofs that this is exactly what this phrase means except to say that the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, uses the same phrase that is used here when it translates Leviticus 4:3:

3 if the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, then let him offer to the LORD for his sin which he has sinned a young bull without blemish as a sin offering.

And also Numbers 8:8

8 Then let them take a young bull with its grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil, and you shall take another young bull as a sin offering.

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The NIV translates it ‘to be a sin offering’ and the ESV gives that as an alternate translation. So ‘for sin’ here means for ‘an atonement,’ a sin offering.

Paul has already laid down the principle of propitiation in 3:25:

‘Whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood...’

All the Old Testament types, the whole burnt offering, the blood offered on the altar, all of those bloody types pointed to the one offering for sin that the Christ would make in his own body on the cross.

After Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan, John the Baptist saw Him walking toward him. John pointed to Jesus of Nazareth and shouted ‘Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’ John understood what Jesus as the Christ, the Lamb of God, must do in the likeness of sinful flesh.

Christ did not come into the world only to teach us as a prophet, or to live as an example for us to follow. He did those things but He came for a higher purpose. He came to be a propitiation for sin, an offering for sin.

Whomever Christ made propitiation for will be ‘in Christ’. When God calls you and convicts you of sin and guilt and the Holy Spirit baptizes {overwhelms} you into Christ then for you there is now no condemnation, no guilt, no judgment, and no punishment! Eternal life means forever!

Those who hold to the view that Jesus died for the redemption of the entire human race cannot be consistent here unless they deny the existence of hell.

If Jesus’ blood made propitiation for your sin; then that is not something that is yet future, i.e. to be determined by your ‘decision.’

Whoever Christ died for already had an offering for sin made for him that propitiates the wrath of God: No condemnation!
That is what an offering for sin means.

Christ actually accomplished salvation for His people.
He shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied!

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Now to look at the phrase:

“that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us.”

The righteous requirement of the law is perfection.

Jesus satisfied the demands of the law **for us**.

The law demands punishment for sin.

Jesus took that punishment for **His people**.

What Jesus did is what we did, those who are ‘in Christ.’

That is representation. Represented in Adam: Guilty!
 Represented in Christ: Not Guilty!

We have no personal righteousness but we have the righteousness of God’s own Son.

**“I need no other argument, I need no other plea,
It is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me.”**

Justified? Yes, praise God, by His grace I am justified, no condemnation!

But the verse doesn’t end there does it?

What is the description of those who have the righteous requirement of the law fulfilled in them? How do we know who they are?

“Who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

You may be thinking, “I knew there was a catch to this thing of being a Christian.” There is no catch to it but there is seriousness and honesty about being a genuine Christian.

I have told you about why I fought the idea of becoming a Christian now these 42 years ago. The Holy Spirit who convinced me of my sin and guilt and judgment also taught me that being a Christian meant more than walking an isle and getting my name on a church member list. It meant a commitment to follow the Lord and to serve others in love.

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There are two fatal errors about justification that will damn many souls.

One fatal error says that a person is justified from all eternity and that it is not essential that they believe in Jesus Christ or profess Christ as their Lord and Savior or live according to the influence of the Holy Spirit while they live this life.

This error perverts the doctrine of election and twists it so that people do not have to be accountable to God for how they live. Many people who believe this error themselves lead a moral life but they excuse others who have no interest in Christ or His church as being okay if they are ‘elect.’

We will deal with the doctrine of election, God’s sovereign choice, when we get to Chapter 9. Just don’t be like some people who close their mind to the teaching because some false teacher has misrepresented this biblical doctrine. It is pride that keeps a man from accepting election!

If the bible doesn’t teach election then you can disregard it, but if the Bible does teach election then you are a fool if you reject the teaching.

The other fatal error about justification that is popular among Southern Baptists. They misuse the expression “Once saved, always saved.” That expression is true only if you define being saved according to the Word of God. Being saved is not making a “decision” and then living as though there were no Holy Spirit. Being saved is not joining a church when you are a teenager and then ignoring the church for the next twenty or so years.

Some call these deluded people who profess to believe but live as though there were no Holy Spirit, ‘Carnal Christians.’ But the Bible won’t allow that error to be true. Verse 8:6 closes the door on that error.

Let’s go back to 7:4 and 6. Let’s describe a believer according to the Bible.

Romans 7:4

Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another-- to Him who was raised from the dead, **that we should bear fruit to God.**

Romans 7:6

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But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, SO that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

Now with that said, look again at 8:4

“who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

Before you can serve God or bear fruit unto God you must be free from the law and be married to Christ. You cannot separate sanctification from justification. Everyone who is justified is being sanctified, set apart for God’s use, and they will walk according to the Spirit.

This word ‘walk’ means our manner of life. The KJV uses the term ‘conversation’ which, when the KJV was written, meant ‘manner of life.’

Now what is it to walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh?

The flesh as we explained before is used in three ways:

- 1) Mankind in general,
- 2) The physical body,
- 3) Fallen human nature, sinful flesh.

The person who walks according to the flesh or his sinful nature is outside of the influence of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean that they are necessarily grossly immoral and wicked; it does mean that they are not interested in knowing what the Word of God says about how they should live. They are influenced by their fallen sinful nature and not by the Holy Spirit.

To walk according to the Spirit is to live a life with an honest and unhypocritical desire to obey God and His Word. But that obedience is from love and not from duty.

Take this example. A man says he loves his wife but is interested in another woman. It doesn’t matter what he says his actions will show whether or not he loves his wife.

A man says he loves Christ but he wants to see how far he can go in sin. It doesn’t matter what he says his walk will show whether or not he loves Christ.

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This matter of the Christian walk is part of a Bible study that I grade for prisoners. One man wrote: "God is slow to anger, but I do not wish to see how slow. I don't want to see how far I can go before God chastens me for being stupid."

This is not sinless perfection but neither is it excusing sin when we refuse to present our members as instruments of unrighteousness.

The Christian walk is the general tenor of our life. It is not perfection but it is not making excuses for sin. It is to repent and believe the Gospel.

What does the general tenor of life mean?

Suppose I asked you to tell me in what direction does the Mississippi River flow? Well, of course the Mississippi River flows from north to south. Any good map will prove that. But if you study the map closely you will see that sometimes it flows from south to north or west to east or east to west, but its general flow, its general tenor, is from north to south.

So if you could read my every thought or record my every word or mood, and select some of my many failures, you would be fair in saying "that is not the way a Christian behaves," and you would be correct. But if you track the general tenor of my life, I am improving and I will be even better the longer I am allowed to live and one day I will be completely perfect in glory with my Lord Jesus!

Let's go back to the new birth, its nature and necessity. What is the difference between walking in the flesh and walking in the Spirit?

The new birth.

Several years ago a very famous evangelist wrote a book entitled, "How to Be Born Again."

Neither this man nor any other man knows how to be born again because it is a sovereign act of God that man has no control over.

Let me close out on this passage by going back to Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3:1-6:

3:1 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." 3 Jesus answered

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and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

That is exactly what the Apostle means here. There are not two kinds of Christians, carnal and spiritual. There are no justified people who are not in the process of being sanctified.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

The only true believers are born again believers who walk according to the Spirit.

Galatians 6:16

16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

Phil 3:16

16 Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

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And so we conclude our exposition of this section of Romans. Romans 8:1-4 is a summary of Chapter 7 on the law of God, what it can and cannot do.

Romans 8:1-4

8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, [who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.] 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made you [me] free from the law of sin and death.

3 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, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

God willing next time we will take up a new section, Romans 8:5-17, which is the description of God's children by adoption.

Are you at peace with God? Do you have the absolute assurance that for you there is therefore now no condemnation? Are you walking according to the Spirit or are you walking according to the flesh?