

Romans

Romans Chapter Eight

Romans 8:5-8

September 19, 2010

This is lesson number 58 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

“CHRISTIANITY DEFINED”

Pardon my immodesty, but this note from a Sermon Audio follower should encourage us all. This is a good summary of what we have been saying about the law and grace.

“Your Sunday school lessons continue to be a source of rich blessing to me. Thank you and your class for not being afraid to bear your souls. That is a great help. I came across a pretty interesting quote from Mr. Spurgeon while reading an article in a religious publication. Regarding the distinction between law and gospel;

"There cannot be a greater difference in the world between two things than there is between law and grace. And yet, strange to say, while the two things are diametrically opposed and essentially different from each other, the human mind is so depraved, and the intellect, even when blessed by the Spirit, has been so turned aside from right judgment, that one of the most difficult things in the world is to discriminate properly between law and grace. He who knows the difference, and always recollects it-- the essential difference between law and grace-- has grasped the marrow of divinity. He is not from understanding the gospel theme in all its ramifications, its outlets, and its branches, who can properly tell the difference between law and grace. There is always in a science some part which is very simple and easy when we have learned it, but which, in the commencement, stands like a high threshold before a pouch. Now, the first difficulty in striving to learn the gospel is this, between law and grace there is a difference plain enough to every Christian and essentially to every enlightened and instructed one; but still, when most enlightened and instructed, there is always a tendency in us to confound the two things. They are as opposite as light and darkness, and can no more agree than fire and water; yet man will be perpetually striving to make a compound of them-- often ignorantly, and sometimes willingly, They seek to blend the two, when God has oppositely put them asunder."
New Park Pulpit in 1856.

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Today we are beginning a new section of our exposition in Romans which is Chapter 8: 5-17 and it is a description of the sons of God or the children of God by adoption.

Chapter Eight is about assurance but we must not have a false assurance. People who have false assurance do not like self-examination.

Verses 5-8 give us the contrast or the difference between the non-Christian and the Christian. Today we are going to examine verses 5-8 and see how they define the non-Christian. Then in our next study {D.V.} we will look at how these same verses define the Christian.

Romans 8:5-8

5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

The non-Christian and the Christian are thereby defined.

We can better understand this distinction between the non-Christian and the genuine Christian by thinking of the phrases “according to the flesh” and “according to the Spirit” as “living under the influence of the flesh” or as “living under the influence of the Spirit.”

In verses 1-4 the Apostle declares that there is therefore now no condemnation or guilt or punishment for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Then Paul also tells us how a person is placed into Christ by the operation of the Spirit, which is the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.”

It is the sovereign act of the Holy Spirit when He regenerates you makes you free from the “law of sin and death.” The law of sin and death is the law of God that condemns and thus leads to death.

You are passive when you are regenerated. What does that mean?

Before a person is born again or regenerated they are dead in trespasses and sins; they have no ability to exercise their will. It is only when they are quickened, or

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made alive that they have the power to respond to the Gospel in repentance and faith.

John 1:12-13

¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Romans 9:15-18

¹⁵ For He says to Moses, *"I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."* ¹⁶ So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, *"For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth."* ¹⁸ Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

Paul then tells us that what the law could not do because it was weak through the flesh or the fallen sinful nature of man, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. Not sinful flesh but in the likeness of sinful flesh.

What Jesus, who is the Christ did in His humiliation and sinless humanity was to honor the holy and just and good law of God so that its righteous requirement of perfect obedience could be fulfilled in us.

God the Father sent His own Son into the world and He lived without sin and He died as the propitiation for sin for "us" because we could not meet the righteous requirement of the holy law of God.

And the "us" in this passage are described as those who do not live under the influence of the flesh but those who live under the influence of the Spirit.

Could the Word of God be any clearer? We have here a description of the difference between someone who is not a Christian and someone who is a Christian. If the Word of God does not define what a Christian is then virtually anyone may be called a Christian.

The U.S. News & World Report { November 25, 2002, PG 25 } reported that Tariq Aziz, Deputy prime minister of Iraq is a Christian. It may be that Mr. Aziz was a "Daniel" serving Saddam Hussein, a heathen king like Nebuchadnezzar; that might be possible.

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But in that part of the world if you are not Muslim you are designated a “Christian.”

It was the same way the Jews viewed the rest of the world when this Letter to the Church at Rome was written. There were Jews and there were those who were not Jews. The non-Jews were called Gentiles. So today in the Middle East if a man is not Muslim he is called Christian.

You might ask why the two classes of people are not Muslims and Jews; because no Jews can live openly as Jews in the Muslim world.

We are just as careless and loose here in America with our acceptance of anyone who claims to be a Christian as being genuine. The worst offense you can make in our ‘politically correct’ society is to question the genuineness of someone’s profession of faith. Biblical morality is no longer the measure of one’s behavior it is whatever you decide it should be. But the Word of God is much more restrictive when it comes to defining how a Christian must live.

What we who claim to be Christian should be concerned about is to know that we individually, you and me, are on the narrow way that leads to life and not on the broad way that leads to destruction that our Lord Jesus warned us about. And the only way to know that is from God’s Word.

So we are dealing with who is and who is not a Christian. But what I have prepared to say in this lesson is a not Jim’s criteria for deciding who is and who is not a Christian, this is what God’s Word tells us.

Let’s be absolutely clear about one thing. There are not two classes of Christians. For a number of years, especially in popular Baptist theology, there was this idea of “carnal” Christians and “spiritual” Christians: Two classes but still Christians.

The need for having two classes of Christians, ‘carnal’ and ‘spiritual’, I believe is because after years of preachers making emotional appeals in prolonged ‘altar calls’ and telling people that salvation can be had by ‘making a decision’ and ‘walking an isle’ the church roles were full of people who had joined the church but had long ago lost any interest in meeting with the people of God.

Well, we surely would not dare to question the genuineness of their profession of faith and so they said, “Oh, they are Christians but they are still carnal.”

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That bit of sophistry comes from a mishandling of 1 Corinthians 3:1-4:

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.² I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; ³ for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? ⁴ For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?

What Paul is saying to the Christians at Corinth is that they are behaving as though they were not Christians; not that ‘carnal’ is an option for a Christian.

The way you understand and interpret Scripture is to compare Scripture with Scripture. If a passage of Scripture is clear then you must use that passage to shed light on a more obscure passage. So when you read Romans 8:5-8 which defines an unbeliever as someone who lives under the influence of the flesh as having a “carnal mind,” you cannot then go to the Corinthian passage and make a “carnally minded” person to be a genuine Christian.

What do verses 5-8 tell us about someone who is “carnally minded?”

5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.⁶ For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.⁷ Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.⁸ So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

We will, God willing, explain these verses in more detail but for now I want to disabuse anyone of any idea that a genuine Christian lives under the influence of the flesh.

So if sometime in the past you have been taught what is called the “carnal Christian theory” you can put it out of your belief system from now on. It is a lie of the devil to deceive a nominal, in name only, so-called ‘Christian.’

There are not two classes of Christians, carnal and spiritual.
There are only non-Christians and Christians.

There are those for whom there is now no condemnation because they are in Christ Jesus and there are those who are unbelievers and remain under the wrath of God. There is simply not another category. A person is either justified and therefore

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there is now no condemnation or they are condemned under the wrath of God and subject to punishment in eternal hell.

So that is one principle that we must have clearly in our mind. That principle is that there are not two classes of Christians; one class who are ‘carnal’ and another class who are ‘spiritual.’

Another principle to keep before us is that when a person becomes a Christian there is a radical change in the way they think and live. When a person stops living under the influence of the flesh and begins to live under the influence of the Spirit it will be obvious to all those who have any dealings with him.

An evangelist of the middle of the last century, Rolfe Barnard, said that when a man is saved even the old dog in the yard would know it.

Brother Barnard said in another sermon that a man told him in the middle of the week that he had just become a Christian and asked if he should tell the church next Sunday to which Barnard replied, “If the Lord has saved you, you won’t be able to keep it a secret until next Sunday.”

A man’s life will change when he is born again and Jesus said unless a man is born from above he will not see the kingdom of heaven.

So as we proceed with our text let’s keep in mind **these two principles**:

There is only one kind of Christian and he is spiritual.

A Christian will change the way he lives from being influenced by the flesh to being influenced by the Spirit.

We have already said that the ‘flesh’ here is the fallen sinful human nature. The person who lives according to the flesh is guided by their fallen sinful human nature and is not guided by the Holy Spirit.

There are many warnings in Scripture about what may be called ‘temporary believers.’ Let’s be reminded of a couple of them.

John 6:60-69

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Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?"

61 When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you?**62** What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?**63** It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.**64** But there are some of you who do not believe."

For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him.**65** And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."

66 From that {time} many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.**67** Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?"

68 But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.**69** Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

From the parable of the sower, or better the soils:

Matthew 13:18-22

"20 But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; **21** yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.

Now let's see some of the things that Paul tells us about a non-Christian.

The phrases 'set their minds on,' and 'to be carnally minded,' mean the way you think. When someone is too interested in your affairs you may say to him, "Mind your own business." Do not set your mind on my business; mind your own business.

This is more than just our thought process, it involves our emotions and desires and affections. The non-Christian makes life decisions and choices based on priorities that satisfy their fallen sinful human nature and the Holy Spirit does not guide them.

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Day in and day out, a person makes choices? Does the Word of God even enter into the matter of making those choices? If not then they are living under the influence of their sinful nature.

The Apostle gave us a fairly comprehensive list of the things of the flesh in Galatians 5: 19-21

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Those characteristics describe a person who lives his life without God.

Be careful to not assign these characteristics only to those who are openly wicked and immoral persons. They apply as well to sophisticated and outwardly moral churchgoers who live under the influence of their fallen sinful nature.

So one thing we know is that a non-Christian minds the flesh.

Another thing we are told in verse 6 is ‘to be carnally minded is death.’

An alternate translation would be ‘the mind of the flesh is death.’

The sort of person that minds the things of the flesh is a non-Christian and now Paul says they are dead.

We should not need to be reminded that the unbeliever is spiritually dead. The natural man or lost man does not understand the truth of God; indeed it is impossible for a lost man to truly grasp spiritual truth.

In the last lesson I tried to make the point that the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is regeneration or the new birth. There must first be a quickening of the spiritually dead sinner before he can show any sign of spiritual life.

Matthew 16:13-18

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When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"

14 So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

Also in:

1 Corinthians 2:13-16

13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.15 But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.16 For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

And in:

Ephesians 2:1-3

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

When the Holy Spirit makes a person alive they have spiritual life and until it pleases God to give us His grace no amount of religion will make the slightest difference.

How religious was Nicodemus the Pharisee?

How religious was Saul of Tarsus?

So the non-Christian minds the flesh and he is spiritually dead.

Then the Apostle tells us another thing about the non-Christian in verse 7.

'Because the carnal mind is enmity {hatred} against God.'

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An alternate translation is:

‘Because the mind of the flesh is at enmity against God.’

That is why the mind of the flesh is death – the mind of the flesh hates God.

All you need to know to discard the ‘Carnal Christian’ notion is to see that the carnal mind or the mind of the flesh hates God.

Colossians 1:21

And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled....

So when someone says they are a “carnal Christian” they are saying “I hate God!” Now not many people are bold enough to say that they hate God. And not many people who really hate God even understand that they do hate God. Why do I say that?

As long as a person can be comfortable with the god of their imagination they don’t hate that conception of God. They will say things like, “My god would not send anyone to hell, and my god is a god of love.”

But let them hear about the wrath of God in Romans Chapter One and watch them squirm. Let them hear a preacher preach the truth of Romans Nine about how it is God’s sovereign choice that makes the difference between who will repent and believe, between a believer and a non-believer and you will see the enmity come out.

Talk to them about the absolute claims of Jesus Christ as the only Savior and the only way to God and you will soon stir up all kinds of resentment and charges of being narrow-minded. “Surely,” they say, “there must be many ways to God.”

This past week a popular radio talk show host was gushing over a picture he saw that was supposed to be Mohammad, Gandhi, Buddha, Moses, and Jesus. It is a denial of Jesus Christ to put Him on a list of religious leaders as being on the same level.

But the Bible is truthful and honest and it tells us that all people come into this world under the holy and just wrath of God.

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The Bible tells us that God is God and that He has mercy on whom he will have mercy and the rest He hardens.”

The Bible tells us that there is no other name by which we must be saved and that name is Jesus. How many churchgoers believe all of that?

So the unbeliever minds the flesh and is spiritually dead and he hates the God of the Bible.

Another thing we are told about the non-Christian in verse 7 is that they are not subject to the law of God.

Now that cannot mean that they are not responsible to the law of God. What it means is that they will not submit themselves to the law of God. They hate God and will not seek to obey Him in love. They are not subject to the law of God. “Indeed,” the Apostle says, “nor indeed can be.”

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 2:14:

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

We have looked at the negative aspects of this passage and how it defines a non-believer. God willing we will continue with some positive things about the Christian.

What is the conclusion of these negatives, these things about the non-Christian? Verse 8:

So then those who are in the flesh, those who mind the flesh, those who are under the influence of their fallen sinful nature, those who are dead in the spirit, those who hate God, those who will not submit to the law of God, are not just ‘carnal’ Christians? No, they cannot please God!

How can a person please God?

There is nothing in your power that you can do. That does not mean that you should not care or be concerned. I pray that if you do not have the firm assurance that for you there is now no condemnation you can beg God to show you His grace.

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If your soul is troubled that you fit the description of the non-Christian as described in this passage what can you do?

Well, if you are troubled it just may be that God is drawing you with His truth.

The Holy Spirit uses the preaching of the Gospel, that Christ died for sinners. Is anyone a sinner? Sinners need a Savior and the only Savior is Jesus Christ.

Can you trust Jesus? Can you trust Jesus? Can you trust Jesus?

Jesus cried out;

John 7:37-39

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."³⁹ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Are you thirsty for the truth? Are you interested in life?

Look to Christ who is the Fountain of Living Water.