

THE WORK OF THE LAW, OF CHRIST, OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Romans 8:1-4

I am convinced that the Bible is the foremost miracle of the ages; a miracle book of unity in diversity and diversity in unity, consisting of 66 books, 1,189 chapters, 31,172 verses and 773,000,692 words. Yet I am fully persuaded that the highest peak of divine truth in this divine library is Romans 8, for in this wonderful chapter we have most of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith set forth:

Verse 1 - Justification

2 - Sanctification

3 - Incarnation

4-8 - The infilling and domination of the Holy Spirit

9 - The indwelling Christ

10 - Death

11 - Resurrection

14 - Sonship

16 - The witness of the Holy Spirit

17 - Inheritance

18 - Suffering

19-24 - The New Creation - New Heaven and New Earth

26 - Prayer

28 - Divine Providence

29 - Predestination

30 - The effectual call, Justification again, and also Glorification

32 - Cross

34 - Christ's intercessory work

35-39 - Eternal security.

Can you find any passage of Scripture ~~in all the world~~ ^{*eighth*} that has so much to say to us as the glorious, inexhaustible chapter of Romans? Already we have surveyed the entire chapter and noted that there are eight great assurances to the children of grace. Now we are digging the golden nuggets out of the individual verses in Romans 8. We have already

examined verses 1 and 2 under our spiritual microscope. They declare: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Now let us consider verses 3 and 4. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." In these two verses we have the work of the law, the work of Jesus Christ, and also the work of the Holy Spirit set forth.

I. In the first place, ^{the} WORK OF THE LAW is set forth -- in negative terms. Paul says that there were some things that the law could not do, because it was weak in the flesh. What was the law unable to do? The law was unable to save a man from sin and to empower an individual to live a godly, pleasing life unto the Lord. The law held up a high standard. It condemned sin in the flesh, it even prescribed death for certain offenses; but the law could not deal with man's basic problem -- sin working through his flesh. The anchor of the law was strong within itself but it would not hold within the mud bottom of man's heart. So the law made its demands but offered no power, whereby one could meet these demands.

A temperance worker handed an alcoholic a pledge card which read, "I promise never to drink alcoholic beverages again." She said to the drunkard, "Take this card and sign it." But when she did, this poor, lost, drunken man pushed it back to her and said, "Take this card back. I do not need something to keep; I need something to keep ME." This indicates ^{the} law's inadequacy. The law was something to do and something to keep, but it did not furnish the power to keep it. It failed because of man's sin in his flesh. Any so-called doctrine or ^gospel which does not show you how to deal with sin is a fake. Do not ever support anything that does not tell you how to deal with sin. There is no hope in anything that does not show you how to deal with your foremost problem - sin.

We live in one of the most ^{deluded} ~~hannighted~~ generations ^{in history} ~~ever known~~. ~~I am disgusted when I read~~
~~about the disintegration of religion in this~~ I am disgusted to see the utter blindness of
today's religious leaders as they fail to grasp man's real need -- for deliverance from
sin and self. I read that one of our leading seminaries is teaching its students ~~the~~
fundamental, economic dynamics. What does that have to do with theology, the Bible, and
God's Word? Anything that cannot save is not worthy of your time or your effort. The law
failed because of the weakness of the flesh, Paul says.

II. THE WORK OF CHRIST. The inadequacy of the law has been fully met in the
glorious, all-sufficient work of Jesus Christ on that cross. For what the law could not
do in its weakness through the flesh, God provided ^{by} ~~by~~ sending His own Son in the likeness
of sinful flesh, condemning sin of its power in our flesh. That is what Paul is saying.
Romans 8:3 is one of the Bible's superlative verses on the work of Jesus Christ. It says
three things:

(1) God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. Here we have
both the deity and humanity of Christ. God sent His Son, which means that He existed before
He was sent. Jesus of Nazareth was God in the flesh.

(2) He was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh. Paul does not say that
He was sent in the likeness of flesh. For had he said that, it would mean Jesus Christ was
not a real man. Nor does Paul say that he was sent in "sinful flesh." Had he said that he
would have been saying that Jesus Christ was a sinner. But he said, "He was sent God, ^{the}
very God, God's own Son, sent from eternity, in the LIKENESS of sinful flesh." This shows
that He was very man of very man. In the person of Jesus Christ you have perfect God and
perfect man: He was God with all power; He was man without sin. Because He was, He was
able to do something that neither law nor any other human system could ever do. He con-
demned sin in the flesh. Here is one of the great unpreached truths of Scripture -- He
condemned sin in the flesh. Notice "sin" is in the singular. Not "s-i-n-s" but "s-i-n."
There is a difference. Jesus died that we might be forgiven of our actual sins, but Paul
is saying here that Jesus has done more than simply ^{make} ~~make~~ it possible to be forgiven of

our actual sins; He has dealt with the sin nature; He has broken the power of evil in man; He has liberated man from the Adamic curse through His death on that cross. We express it like this: Jesus died to save us from the guilt of sin. He also died to sanctify us from the power of sin. What Paul is talking about in Romans 3 is the power of indwelling sin. We know that a man must be forgiven before he can be a Christian. You must be forgiven and KNOW that you are forgiven.

I asked a service station attendant, "Are you a Christian?" He replied, "If I am, I do not know it." I said, "Friend, you are not or you would know it." Forgiveness is a wonderful thing but sin is not dealt with simply through forgiveness. After sin is forgiven in our hearts there is that peace with God - but the resident power of evil continues to dwell in a man's heart even if he never committed another act of sin. That is the predicament of man - his nature - the evil disposition of man which has come down to all men. Paul says that Jesus has met this in his death on the cross, thereby condemning it in your flesh that it might be deprived of its power and that you might have victory over it.

There are people who think you are forgiven of your sins and that later on you receive power over those sins (or a second work of grace, or sanctification). A very earnest group of people teach this. I do not condemn them because they are trying to live right. But they are scripturally wrong. We see pale, sallow-faced women who have wiped cosmetics off their face but have not wiped the gossip off their lips. They practice an external separation but they lack holiness in the heart. Jesus Christ is one, and when we receive Him we receive all of Him at once. Not only do we receive the forgiveness of sin, but we receive a power over evil in our lives in order to live victoriously for God in this present world. That is what Paul is teaching. Romans 8 is not a chapter on justification, it is a chapter on sanctification. It tells us how to live the victorious life by appropriating the total work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

This two-fold work of Christ is typified in the sin offering in the Old Testament. In Leviticus 4 we read that the bullock was slaughtered and the precious blood poured out before Jehovah God. This represented that atonement for the actual sins of the people. That would represent justification, but that same bullock in the second phase of atonement was taken outside of the camp and every bit of it was burned by fire. The offering was burned after it had been sacrificed and the precious blood poured out before Jehovah God. Then it was taken outside of the camp and every bit of it was burned. This represents God's holy dealing with sin. God cannot traffic with sin. He has dealt with all sin in Jesus Christ. When you become a Christian God does not leave you in bondage. God makes you a free person - a free man - a new creation in Christ Jesus. Jesus said, "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:32). I find that most people are not free. Why are they not? Because their gospel is defective. They have not understood Romans 8. He deprived sin of its power in His flesh that we might be forgiven of our actual sins, but also delivered from the power of sin. This is liberty, joy, victory, the normal Christian life -- it is not something you get on installments. It is something that you get when you receive Christ as Savior and Lord.

III. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. God's requirement for His children is that they live righteously in this world. They could never do it by the law; they did not have the power. No human being on earth can ever please God in the flesh or in his own power. But the text says that the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit. Underline that! I am amazed at some people who call themselves Christian. They are not as good as Jews, nor as moral as Mohammedans or Buddhists. If we say there is no moral requirement of God and that the commandments have been abdicated, we are simply going backwards instead of forwards. This is not the Gospel. Paul says the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us - not by us, but in us - who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit. This is possible because of what Jesus Christ has done. It is NOT possible without Him. It is possible because Jesus Christ has deprived sin of its power in our flesh. He has made of His people a new creation, a new humanity, and has

sent the blessed Holy Spirit to inswell His poeple, the temples of God. The Holy Spirit creates within us both the desire and the power to live like Jesus. This is not works righteousness at all - this is not the works of the flesh - this is not salvation at all. We are talking about the Christian life. We are talking about God's enablement to live a new life in the power of the Holy Spirit. Notice he says that the righteous requirement of the Lord might be fulfilled in us. Not by us. If he had said "by us," that would have indicated we are doing it. It is not BY us. If so, we go back to the law. It is IN us because it is the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit who has been sent in life to enable us to be that which we could never be without Him.

Paul never said for a moment that he lived the Christian life. He never told us one time to try to live it ourselves. He summed up Christian life in one statement, "I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20)." I will make it very simple: If you are a Christian today, your sins have been forgiven, and sin has been condemned in your flesh, the very nature of sin has been brought under the judgment of the cross and it has been deprived of its power. You have been made a new creation in Christ and the Holy Spirit is indwelling your heart. You have a desire within your soul to serve Jesus. You will not be perfect, but the desire is there. A man who has this does not have to be dragged to church. There is something in him that impels him to go. This is the Holy Spirit. A man like this will not take God's Name in vain. The righteous requirements of the law are on the inside. The very law of God is written in the heart. You do not have to put the ten commandments over your lavatory, and there is no point in memorizing them unless they are written in your heart.

I thank God today for a Gospel that delivers a man. Much that is preached today leaves a man right where he is. It does not show him a new way! This is one of the greatest reasons we are not attracting the lost, hardened people of our world. They do

not see the power of the gospel in us. They have not heard all the gospel, just part of it. They have heard the forgiveness of sins but not the sanctifying power of God and Holy Spirit's power to change their lives and to lead them in the paths of obedience.

John Wesley preached for 14 years before he was saved. Finally he was saved and we have his testimony: "Assurance was given to me that Christ had taken away my sin, even mine, and had saved me from the law of sin and death." That is the two-fold work of Christ on the cross appropriated at the moment of conversion, at the moment of the new birth. John Wesley recognized it. No wonder he changed the world. He said, "Now only are my sins taken away but I have been saved from the law, from the dominion of sin in my life until I am a free man! I do not have to say yes to sin but I can say yes to the Holy Spirit."

A man was gloriously redeemed and he was happy about it. He boarded a plane the next day and began to sing. There is a song in the heart of a man who has been to Romans 8. He was singing, "I Have Been Redeemed." A fellowpassenger turned to him and said, "Have you been redeemed?" The man said, "Yes." The passenger said, "When were you redeemed?" "I was really redeemed 1900 years ago but I just found out about it last night."

Has Christ changed you? If not, He can. Just believe all the gospel. Repent of your sins and come to Christ and confess Him.