

“The Greatest Blessing of All Is Ours, Christ In Us, the Hope of Glory”
The Normal Christian Life - Paul's Testimony, Part 3

Review: “Paul Learns Liberty From His Bondage to the Flesh Through Its Dominion”

- ***The Law Is Good, But It Provokes A Deep-Seated Task Master Within, Sin***
- ***The Facts of Our Struggle Prove the Bondage of the Will***
- ***This Conflict Between the Flesh and the Spirit Has No Human Solution***
- ***Oh, Blessed Grace: Christ Himself Is Our Deliverer from This Enslavement!***

- ***The Law Is Good, But It Provokes A Deep-Seated Task Master Within, Sin***
 - Our disappointments with life’s spiritual journey as believers teach us that we have, even as believers, an issue with indwelling sin, even a nature devoted to that, and one that dominates our renewed spirit so easily.

As the apostle teaches us here, the reality of the conflict with a nature within that desires evil continually cannot be ignored. So he speaks directly to it using himself as an example, humbling himself exceedingly as he writes here in chapter 7:

Romans 7:12-17

12 Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is* good.

17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

- The divine logic and purpose are seen here so clearly. The Law revealed the depths of sin present in us all as he had taught so powerfully in chapter 3:

Romans 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

The Law had not been given to bring righteousness for the Jew but to magnify the sin within. Therefore, through the Law, the true depth of sin might be known. This is one of the foremost teachings in Romans, as we

have seen so well, when considered dispensationally. Furthermore, if God's own chosen and so blessed nation was in that lawless condition in respect to the Law, then it could be logically concluded that all others would be similarly found to be law-breakers, as 3:20 states so powerfully.

But our condition is not hopeless, praise God, for us who dwell in the Dispensation of the Grace of God.

- The conflict is now described in unforgettable terms in verses 15-16, where he describes his own experience in which he saw clearly that there were opposing principles or faculties within him, with the evil one dominating. This was a hopeless condition for him, for he desired to keep the law which in itself was good and honorable:

Romans 7:15-16

15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is* good.

- His conclusion he found to be quite unavoidable, verse 17, and here many have disagreed, since their view of human nature is so different from the apostle's. But his logic here is inescapable. His chosen wording is telling. We could spend some time here, but we will not. Let's keep it simple, as in fact he does:

"Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

- Paul did not desire the outcomes, but he was overwhelmed! So he blames the nature of sin indwelling him. It might seem that this is a convenient escape, blaming something else seemingly beyond his control. But in fact, it is in line with the entire teaching here. There is one person only, the "I", but two natures in the believer, the one oriented towards evil and sin, and the other oriented towards good and righteousness.

So, the apostle teaches, we as persons possess a spirit, and that spirit is what Paul here calls "I". The grand question is, of course, how can we be delivered from this bondage? He already answered it so well in the previous chapter, but here he, through his own testimony, underscores the ease with which a believer may still be deceived by legalisms and religiously inspired false teachers.

This is critically important teaching indeed. Many refuse it, sadly. But we are caught, as it were, between the two with the sin nature in dominance.

He now continues on this theme, knowing that many will not be easily convinced of its truth:

- ***This Conflict Between the Flesh and the Spirit Has No Human Solution***

- Paul summarizes his teaching here before closing this subject in the next verses.

Romans 7:21-23

21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

- The word “law” is used 7 times here in this one chapter, and not always in quite the same way. Sometimes it refers to a part of the Law of Moses. In other places (and more commonly here in chapter 7), it refers to a principle of action that describes realities within all believers. In other words, “this is just how things work.”
- Many have written (especially anti-dispensational, so-called “covenant” teachers) that we have here the natural state of the unbeliever. But that cannot be since Paul, in that case, would have to be lying when he writes that “when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man...”, Verses 21 & 22.
- This then is the ongoing state of the believer. He is teaching from his own experience, that two principles operate within us all, and not only one. They co-exist, and the believer finds himself enslaved by the dominating influence of the power of sin dwelling within, the sin nature, so that he was led “into captivity to the law of sin which [was] in [his] members.”

- ***Oh, Blessed Grace: Christ Himself Is Our Deliverer from This Enslavement!***

Romans 7:24-25

24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

- These are most wonderful and hopeful words found here in this chapter. They are truly blessed, and they delivered me for many years now from a truly night of the soul into the glorious liberty Christ had already secured for me and all believers once and for all through his completed sacrifice and glorious resurrection.

- ***KNOW - RECKON - YIELD, that is the key to our living, stated so powerfully earlier. Paul is continuing that line of thinking here, but using different terminology. For all is based on our full redemption through Christ and our knowledge, and then our reckoning or counting on by faith that reality...***

Our Outline Today: “The Greatest Blessing of All Is Ours, Christ In Us, the Hope of Glory”

- ***Our Constant Hope and Comfort Is That We Shall Never Be Condemned***
- ***The Greatest Blessing of All Is Ours, Christ In Us, the Hope of Glory***

Next Time:

- ***Our Opportunity Today Under Grace Is to Live After the Spirit***

I. Our Constant Hope and Comfort Is That We Shall Never Be Condemned:

[READ] Romans 8:1-4

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made 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 sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

- ***The keys to our understanding here are these:***

- The stark contrast between the believer and the unbeliever established in chapter 7 continues now into chapter 8. This will become especially clear later in this chapter. But it is true here in the first verses as well.
- Verse 1 draws a conclusion from the earlier verses, where the apostle confesses regarding his life before, when he had given up his liberty in Christ for bondage to a law. The conclusion is as we have seen, that though believers do place themselves under laws and by so doing give themselves over unwisely to the power of the flesh, they nevertheless, as believers with the indwelling spirit and a new nature, are still walking after the spirit and as verse 25 of chapter 7 says, serve with the renewed mind a law of God. They are lawful as God sees them. We do not lose our righteous

standing before Almighty God when we turn aside from his gracious provisions for a time. The last verses in the chapter confirm this:

Romans 7:24-25

24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

- ***And so he concludes in chapter 8, verse 1***, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

He is clearly continuing the same subject and there should be no chapter division here.

So he cannot be writing as some believe, only of the mature or the more spiritual believers, but of all, in fact, of all those who are “in Christ Jesus”. That, of course, is all believers, not only some. All believers are, in fact, therefore “walking” after the spirit, though they are not always pleasing God.

- Verses 2 - 4 explain in terms much like those in the earlier chapter what the facts are regarding what has been accomplished in the perfect work of our blessed Lord Jesus and in his resurrection. By that completed work all believers have been transformed by God through salvation.

Those facts are these, all of course stated in the past tense:

- Verse 2: We have all been set free from the law of sin and death by the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus! This is wonderful indeed and provides the spiritual foundation for what is in verse 4, “... that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”
- Verse 3: How that was accomplished is written clearly here, for God’s own Son took upon himself “the likeness of sinful flesh”, not human flesh corrupted by sin itself. But from God’s point of view, it was enough. There is a lot there, but we must save it for another time, Lord willing.
- Verse 4: The requirement of the law, therefore, was met; it was fulfilled. There is an ending on the Greek word here, conveying the meaning that he is not talking about the hundreds of “acts” of

righteousness that the law required, but rather what could fulfill that law.

Verse 3 explained what that was, what the law required, for only that perfect sacrifice that had already been offered for the sins of the world could make the difference — for all our sins. Amen.

So we who are “walking”, whose entire “way of living” is “after the spirit,” have by God’s unlimited grace fulfilled in us the “righteous requirement or judgment of the law” through Christ’s perfect offering, for we are, as the Lord God sees us, “in Christ Jesus”. So now we better know what it means to be in Christ Jesus, do we not? Amen. Praise God.

[READ] Romans 8:5-8

5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after 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, neither indeed can be.

8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

- Now, as he has written here in these verses, Paul shows the contrast, not with carnal or unspiritual believers, but with the unsaved. He writes of those “... that are after the flesh” as opposed to those “... that are after the Spirit”. His conclusion regarding them is simple: they live in the realm of death and not life, and are not even able to be subject to the law of God. They have no spiritual capability of any kind. Again, we see that he is boldly contrasting believers and unbelievers and not spiritual or maturing believers with believers who are carnal and fleshly. It is so clear.

Unbelievers are “after the flesh”, are “in the flesh”, and “walk after the flesh”, all three. They, therefore, have no hope and only have condemnation ahead, while we shall “never be condemned” for “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”
What a promise we have in our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. The Greatest Blessing of All Is Ours, Christ In Us, the Hope of Glory:

[READ] Romans 8:9-11

9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

10 And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

- Here, our apostle turns to us and our unique and detailed blessings, dispensationally considered. In so many ways, he teaches us how very distinctive our blessings are now, under grace. There are two fundamentals detailed here, and both are called indwelling, first the Spirit in verses 9 & 11, and then Christ himself, in verses 9 & 10. These are not the same as what is often taught:

- “The Spirit of Christ”: Verse 10 gives us the focus on Christ’s resurrection life, which we possess. Verse 2 summarizes what the apostle has taught us in chapters 5 and 6. There are many verses there and elsewhere to teach us these glorious and liberating truths, such as in Galatians chapter 2:

[READ] Galatians 2:20 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.

And there are so many more. Consider also Romans 5:17, 21; 6:4, 23; Colossians 3:3, 4.

- “The Spirit of God”: He is an enabler, as verse 11 indicates. It seems to me, though, that it is the application of Christ’s life in us and through us that is the focus here. But surely both spirits work together in unison to accomplish the purpose of God through us.
- There is much teaching compressed here in a few words, but having both the Holy Spirit and Christ indwelling us is most wonderful indeed. We should expect some differences in their ministries to us, and such there are. Galatians 5 outlines some of them as we shall soon see. But perhaps the greatest of all is in Colossians 1:

[READ] Colossians 1:25-29

25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

- Paul now draws a very practical conclusion about our lives with the blessings and provisions for our lives as believers living by grace, with its many critically important distinctions. We are most blessed!

Romans 8:12-14

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Conclusions / Exhortations:

- Next time I hope to tell you more, but my testimony with these verses was so compelling, firstly when the Lord was intersecting so directly in my life through them, and then secondly, when at seminary.
 - I came to know how God's grace was so powerful and so helpful in delivering me from the power of legalism that had bound me as a believer for a while. For I was quite literally "living in them" as I believe was Paul's intent for all of us....

Have you lived there as well? If so, how glorious has your deliverance been? Any testimonies?