

Tuesday Evening Bible Study at Tokyo Baptist Church
Paul's Letter to the Romans – Chapter 8, Verses 1-11
Notes from Tuesday November 9, 2010
Last Revised on November 14, 2010

Songs

Opening Prayer

Introduction

This evening we continue our study of the Letter of Paul to the Romans.

Last week we completed **Chapter 7**.

Tonight we will read the first **11** verses of Chapter 8

But first let's begin with some **review**.

Please turn to the beginning of the letter and follow along with me.

Review

The **overall** theme of Paul's letter to the Romans is ... the **gospel**.

The first part of Chapter 1 contains **introductory** material, which helps us to understand the situation of Paul and his readers and previews the gospel and certain key elements of what is to follow in the letter.

Beginning in **Verse 18** and continuing to the end of Chapter 1, Paul examines the **ungodliness** and **unrighteousness** of men.

In **Chapter 2 and the first 20 verses of Chapter 3**, Paul argues that such ungodliness and unrighteousness has **always** pervaded **all** of humanity, including **even** the most **law-abiding Jews**.

The point, as Paul explains in **the remainder of Chapter 3**, is that nobody can be saved from sin and death, **except** as a **free** gift of God, which we receive through **faith** in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Consequently none of us should ever **boast** in our salvation, because our salvation is not something that we **accomplish**, it is merely something that we receive as a free gift from God, through faith, and even the **faith** is a free gift from God. **(So what exactly would you**

boast about?!)

Chapter 3 **ends** with the statement that saving faith such as this **upholds** the law.

This is so, primarily I think, because such faith always **expresses** itself as **obedience**,

and as precisely the genuine heart-felt **sort** of obedience that pleases God.

Thus from the perspective of God, who sees and knows everything, faith and obedience are **one**.

And in any case, proper God-pleasing, obedience **without** faith is **impossible**.

Paul aptly illustrates this point in **Chapter 4**, which is all about **Abraham** one of the great heroes of faith of the Old Testament.

Abraham **believed** God and that belief, in itself, was **credited** to him **as righteousness**,

apart from the law, before there even **was** Law, and **before** Abraham's most remarkable acts of obedience.

Do you see it? Obedience is the inevitable **outworking** of faith in those chosen by God!

The same is true for **all** who have faith in the God of Abraham, who raised **Christ** from the dead!

In **the first 11 verses of Chapter 5**, Paul speaks of the peace, and joy, and hope, and love that we experience, even in our **suffering**, even **because** of our suffering,

as we contemplate and come to understand the fact that God in Christ came down to suffer **with** us and **for** us while we were **still** his enemies.

And now that we have been **reconciled** with God, and in this awesome way, we are **confident** of our salvation,

because having died in this way, to **atone** for our sins, Jesus then **rose** from the dead, and **ascended** to heaven, where he sits at the right hand of God **interceding** for us! and where he has gone to prepare a place for us, so that where he is, we may be also!

In the remainder of Chapter 5 (**Verses 12-21**) Paul illuminates the power and efficacy of the gospel, by explaining how God in Christ has overcome the Fall of Man:

The first Man, Adam, **disobeyed** God and so sin entered the world and with it came death for all men.

 Apart from Christ 100 percent of all men and women who have ever lived have been **dying** and prospectively **dead** from the moment of their birth.

 Yet the perfect **obedience**, in life and death, of the one man sent by God to save us, has atoned for every single sin committed by every single person who ever puts their trust in Him.

 For an untold multitude of believers, He is **LIFE** and **LIFE ABUNDANT** *exactly* out of **DEATH**.

 “What shall we say then?” Paul asks at the beginning of **Chapter 6**.

 “Are we to **continue** in sin that grace may abound?”

 “**By no means!**” he answers himself in the first part of **Verse 2**,

 and then aptly asks the question, but “How **can** we who died to sin still live in it?”

Remember obedience is the inevitable **outworking** of the **faith** by which we are **saved!**

 The first 14 verses of Chapter 6 are essentially a meditation on Christian baptism, the ordinance in which we identify ourselves **personally** with the **death** and **resurrection** of Christ, in order that we may walk after Him in “*newness of life*.”

 It would be **absurd** to emerge from the waters of baptism, and to take our place in the body of Christ, which is the Church, with the sense that it is OK now to sin or, that **any** of our sins (past, present, or future) are somehow OK. Christians do **not** think this. Sin is **never** OK!

 On the contrary, Paul continues in **Verses 5-11 of Chapter 6**, by becoming **united** with Christ, we have been set **free** from sin and death, and assured a blessed eternal life **with** God, which surely **will** be a life eternally free from sin!

 Therefore he concludes this baptismal meditation in **Verses 12-14** of Chapter 6 with this **admonition** for our **present** life on earth: that we **must not** allow sin to reign in our mortal bodies.

 A similar set of issues is examined in **Verses 15-23 of Chapter 6** where Paul uses the metaphor of **slavery** to help us see that there are **two** and **only** two alternatives available to us:

 Either we **remain** slaves of **sin** or we become slaves of **God**, in the happy sense Paul means here.

 Men and women who do remain slaves of sin will **surely** die, without God and without hope in this world,

 and this is what all men and women **will** do, unless and until they become slaves of God.

 But what about the faithful **slaves of God**? What **should** they do? And what **do** they do?

 The answer is: if they truly **have** become slaves of God, then they **should** become more obedient and that is what they **will** do. It is **axiomatic**. It is **inevitable**.

Obedience is the **inevitable expression** of saving faith.

 Or in the words of the Reformers) there **is no justification** without **sanctification**.

 Or in the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, there is (or should be) no “**cheap grace**.”

 In still other words, our salvation makes us **increasingly** (albeit accidentally) law-abiding.

 Yet all of this obedience contributes **nothing** toward our salvation because, insofar as the **law** is concerned we stand **justly** condemned to death, many times over, because of our **sin**, and Christ has **already** died this death for us, we people of faith, and because **no** one may received salvation otherwise except by grace through faith alone.

 Our obedience is, once again, an **expression** of our **faith** and **not** a means of our salvation.

 Such is the sense of the **first 6 verses of Chapter 7**.

 It would be a **mistake** to suppose, based on what Paul had written that the law itself is **bad** thing.

Verses 7-12 of Chapter 7 are intended to avoid such a mistake. It is **sin** that kills us **not** the law.

 Indeed the law has the **beneficial** effect of making more clear to us, both our sinful **thoughts** and **deeds** and, **also**, our corrupt **nature** of which these sinful thoughts and deeds are an expression.

Without the law we would fail to **realize** just how sick we really are, sick unto **certain** death, and therefore just how certainly we need a **savior**, and just how certainly this savior needs to be **God**, who **alone** can bring life from death.

 This is the sense of the remainder of **Chapter 7** which we studied last week.

God did **not** send the law in order to **kill** us but, on the contrary, to help us, by pointing us to **himself** as the only **possible** source of our **salvation** and **sanctification**.

Even though we believers come to **delight** in the law, we **can** not **keep** it very well, and therefore we recognize and are constantly reminded that we are neither gods, nor angels, but mere creatures of the flesh, sold under sin, who depend on God our Savior for everything, now and in eternity, and insofar as the flesh is concerned we are creatures who must **certainly** die, figuratively (mortification) and literally (actual death).

While we remain in this wretched “**body of death**” there is a war raging between **conflicting** laws: the law of God in my inner being and **another** law, **of sin**, that dwells in my flesh, Paul says.

Only **God** can deliver us, which he has done through Jesus Christ, Our Lord..

Chapter 7 ends on an encouraging note:

(Chapter 7, Verse 25)

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

So ends our review.

Are there any questions or comments before we continue into Chapter 8?

Paul’s Letter to the Romans, Chapter 8, Verses 1-11

OK then would someone please read Chapter 8, Verses 1-11, in Japanese.

Thank you. Now would someone please read those same verses in English.

- 1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**
- 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.**
- 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,**
- 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us,**

who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

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 set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Thank you.

Again Verse 1 reads:

(Verse 1)

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

Having read the first seven chapters of Paul's letter to the Romans, we are not surprised to read that there is "*now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*"

We understand that without Christ all who have ever lived stand justly condemned to death because of sin.

We know that God sent Christ to die as an atonement for sin, once for all,

so that there is "*no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*"

The "*now*" in Verse 1 refers to human history in the shadow of the the cross.

 Yet the resurrection of Christ, which occurred at a particular point in human history, was the revelation of something vast and eternal, of God reconciling **himself** with Man,

 and this overshadows **all** of time and eternity.

 Please turn to 2 Corinthians, Chapter 5, Verses 16-21, where Paul writes to the church in Corinth:

(2 Corinthians, Chapter 5, Verses 16-21)

From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

So I believe that the “**now**” of Verse 1 of Romans Chapter 8 refers to all of time and eternity when viewed from within human history **following** the resurrection, and therefore also, the death, life, and birth of Jesus Christ.

 The word “**therefore**” in verse 1 connects the magnificent thought of verse 1 with something that Paul has written **previously**, something which appears in first seven chapters of this letter.

 I don’t know about you, but my natural tendency as a reader, when I see the word “therefore” is to attempt to connect the thought **immediately** following the “**therefore**” with the thought **immediately** preceding it.

 But that does not always work, because frequently, as here, the word “**therefore**” is summing up and drawing a conclusion based on a rather large block of preceding text, conceivably even the entire text to that point.

 But here, in Verse 1 of Chapter 8, Paul is probably drawing a conclusion based primarily on the things that he has written in Chapters **5, 6 and 7.**

 These chapters (as we have seen) contain large and difficult blocks of text which are written to avoid and to correct possible **misunderstandings**.

But the basic message remains relatively simple and consistent throughout this section, and is fairly well summarized in Verse 1 of Chapter 8 --- i.e. ***“That there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*** (8:1)

It is probably fair to say (and many commentators have said) that Verse 1 of Chapter 8 **continues** the line of thought which was interrupted at the end of **Verse 6 of Chapter 7** -- the interruption being the important digression on the law and sin i.e. 7:7-25) which we studied last week.

We have previously noted that Verse 1 of **Chapter 7** appears to resume the line of thought which was interrupted at the end of Verse 14 of **Chapter 6** --- with the interruption, there (i.e. 6:15-23) being another important digression on the relationship between law and sin.

In any case, here at the beginning of Chapter 8, Paul is continuing to work with some of the **simpler** themes that we are already familiar with from our reading to this point.

Yet he now begins to comment rather extensively, for the first time in this letter, on the work of the **Holy Spirit**.

And there is **nothing** simple about the Holy Spirit, at least nothing that is very easy for human beings to **understand!**

So let's take it **slow**.

The word “spirit” (pneuma) appears only only **5 times in the first 7 Chapters** of Romans, and only **8 times in Chapters 9-16**, but this word appears **21 times in here Chapter 8**, which is much more often than any other single chapter in the entire New Testament.

Whenever this word appears, it falls to the translator and the expositor to determine whether the word is referring to the **human** spirit or to the Third Person o the Holy Trinity --- i.e. the **Holy Spirit**.

What the translator thinks is indicated in the text by the capitalization of the letter S in Spirit.

I believe that **all but two of the 21 occurrences in Chapter 8** are capitalized.

I will try to remember to note the exceptions as we go, but very clearly Paul is preoccupied in Chapter 8 with God the Holy Spirit.

Verse 2 continues

(Verse 2)

For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

The word “for” suggests that Verse 2 gives an explanation of what is said in Verse 1.

Without Christ we stood justly condemned to death because of our sin.

We were in other words held hopelessly captive to sin and death.

We had no way out of either.

This, I believe, is what is meant in Verse 2, by the “*law of sin and death*”

But this law does not apply to those who are “*in Christ Jesus*” (Verse 1)

They have been “*set free*” in Christ Jesus,

by “*the law of the Spirit of life*”

Grammatically “Spirit of life” may be understood as “*life-giving Spirit*”

It is almost certainly correct to understand this to mean the Spirit of God

Who is also called the Holy Spirit

And we refer to him by many other names as well

But here Paul thought it best to call him the “**Spirit of Life.**”

Q. We must ask what is the “*law of the Spirit of life*?”

A. We know already that Paul almost certainly does not mean the written letter of the law, since he had already carefully and at great length explained that the letter of the law can not save anyone.

He will reemphasize this point once again shortly.

So Paul must mean something else.

Q. So once again what is the “law of the Spirit of life?”

Perhaps it helps to look back to the slavery metaphor of the latter part of Chapter 6 and

especially to verses **17 and 18 of Chapter 6** where Paul says:

(Chapter 6, Verses 17 and 18)

But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

By placing us under the **dominion** of a **new** law, God has set us free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

In Chapter 6, Verses 17 and 18 this new law is described as an **obedience from the heart** and as a kind of **slavery to righteousness**.

Here at the beginning of Chapter 8, Paul describes this new law as being a law of the **Holy Spirit**,

who he prefers here to name the **life-giving** Spirit or Spirit of life.

Clearly we have in view here a real transformation that is **inward**, **spiritual**, and **life-giving**.

This seems to flow into Verse 3, which continues

(Verse 3)

For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,

The “*for*” again suggests that Verse 3 is offering additional explanation of the preceding two verses.

Our **liberation** by “the law of the Spirit of life” is something which “*God has done.*”

Notice the perfect verb tense. It is something which God has **already** done.

Q. What **exactly** it is that God has done?

A. That which the **law** could **not** do.

Q. What could the law **not** do?

A. **Make** people righteous.

This is not because the **law** is bad (we know that!) but because the **flesh** is weak.

The flesh can not keep the law. It is incapable.

Men cannot be righteous by themselves, even with the help of God's perfect law.

Another way of saying this is that the flesh is a inevitably and inescapably a slave to sin.

Because this is so, what God has eternally purposed and done, is to send his own Son in the "*likeness of sinful flesh*"

This speaks of nothing less than the incarnation of the eternal Son of God,

and of his birth to the Virgin Mary,

and of his being wholly God (God's own son)

and of his being wholly Human (in the likeness of sinful flesh)

and of his being offered, and offering himself, "*for sin*"

which we can understand at least in the sense of offering himself as a sin offering.

But more than that, I think...

When Jesus was nailed to the cross, all sins of the flesh were condemned by God, and punished.

God did this, we read in Verse 4

(Verse 4)

in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

By those "*who walk ...according to the Spirit*" Paul unquestionably means to include all who are "*in Christ Jesus*." (cf. vv 1-2)

And here and everywhere Paul clearly means to say that those who are "*in Christ Jesus*" and who thus "*walk...according to the Spirit*" must not and no longer do walk "*according to the flesh*."

Which is to say, in different words, that the way of the Christian is somehow different from the way of the world.

Or in still other words that the **character** of the Christian is somehow different from the **character** of others in the world.

Yet we clearly see that all men, including all born-again believers, including even the Apostle Paul, do **continue** to sin for so long as we live. And we know that this is **NOT OK!**

Q. So how can we **escape** God's condemnation of our sin?

Q. and how can God who is righteous and just **fail** to condemn us?

The answers to these questions is, I believe, given in this **Verse 4.**

God sent his Son to receive and to manifest God's the just condemnation for **all** sin,

In this way we **poor sinners** who are "*in Christ*" and who therefore "*walk according to the Spirit*" actually do satisfy the just requirement of the law.

In part I understand this to mean that our many transgression are **forgiven** because of Christ,

In part I understand this to mean that **His** perfect righteousness has been **attributed** to us,

and in part I note carefully the singular tense of the word "**requirement**" and try to remember all that the Bible teaches about God looking straight in to the inward state of our heart, which I believe in Christians has been made new and placed under the **infallible** control of God the **Holy Spirit.**

Those who have been redeemed by Christ do inwardly, mysteriously, and truly delight in the ways of God in their inner being, even **now** however imperfectly, and perfectly throughout **eternity.**

The thing is, if we are in Christ, we have **already** passed from death to eternal life and become a new creation.

The latter (our perfect eternal self) swallows up the former (imperfect mortal self) and the latter is very nearly dead and gone already!

Our new eternal life is hidden with Christ in God and **ruled** by the law of the Spirit of life, It is safe and assured.

Which means, I think it is fair to say, that we are now, rather firmly, albeit very mysteriously being **led** by God the Holy Spirit, in a way that will inevitably and irresistibly overcome, and has indeed already overcome, the law of sin and death.

As many Christian songs attest “we will never be the same again” and there is “no turning back.”

Verse 5 reads:

(Verse 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 set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

When God sets us free from the law of sin and death and subjects us to the law of the Spirit of life (Verse 1) we will inevitably lose interest in the things of the flesh and gain interest in the things of the Spirit.

This is one of the reasons why believers often come to be despised by the world

We are speaking here, too, of genuine repentance, which is only possible by the Spirit of God and without which there can be no redemption.

We come to sin less, not because of an increase in or will-power, but because we actually come to hate sin more and more, especially in ourselves, and we actually come to value and delight in the positive things of God.

This mental redirection, this change of focus from flesh to Spirit, will inevitably result in changed behavior also, but the change of mind must come first and is most important.

And as we noted during our review, the change in heart is, from God’s perspective, practically the same thing as a change of behavior. He already knows how it will work out.

Verse 6 reads

(Verse 6)

For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

This reminds me of the passage in Deuteronomy, where Moses sets before the people all of the commandments of God and offers them a choice between obedience leading to life and peace or disobedience leading to death.

We know how that worked out. And that is what the Bible teaches and the path which leads us to Christ and the gospel.

Flesh alone is **incapable** of obedience leading to life and peace.

Only God **Himself**, in Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit, can take us there, and he must radically **change** us in order to accomplish this. We must finally **die** to the flesh and be reborn in the **Spirit**.

Verse 7 reads

(Verse 7)

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

Except as we are regenerated by the Spirit of Holiness, our minds **are** st on the flesh, **hostile** to God, and both **unwilling** and **unable** to submit to God's law.

This is not because our **will** is mechanically defective, but because **we** are defective. We freely chose what **we** most desire, and that is things of the **flesh**. In the flesh, we **hate** God.

Verse 8 states the obvious

(Verse 8)

Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Even if those who are in the flesh **could** understand the written letter of God's law and obey it **perfectly**, which they cannot, that would not please **God**, because those who are in the flesh do **not** delight in God's law or, even, like God.

This is not **primarily** a matter of obedience, but of **preference**, of **inclination**, as God said long, long ago, in the time of Noah:

(Genesis 6:5)

The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

It should be clear by now that Paul is **not** speaking of two states, flesh and Spirit, that men can go back and forth between.

This a **one way street**.

We **all** begin in the flesh.

Some **end up** in the Spirit.

And in **that** way, and that way **only**, lies **salvation**.

The **Spirit** is life.

All along we have been presuming, as has Paul, that the people who will read this letter are Christians.

This explains Verse 9 which reads,

(Verse 9)

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

Then are now and were then, I suppose, many **nominal** Christians meaning Christians in name only.

But to **actually** be a Christian is not something one can simply **claim** for one's self.

Neither is there any **ceremony**, baptism or whatever, which can make this happen.

To truly become Christian is a transition from **death** to **life**, from **flesh** to **spirit**,

It is an **actual** change in the individual which can **only** be accomplished by God, the Holy Spirit.

This is an operation that **regenerates** the believer and subjects him to the **leading** of the Spirit.

This involves is a noticeable change of **mind**, sure enough, as Paul has been saying and also,

a change that **manifests** itself outwardly with increasingly godly **behavior**. as Paul has also been teaching right along

and it is probably much, much more than these things, but very hard for we humans to **comprehend**.

But whatever is involved in this process, it all **begins** in the activity of God the Holy Spirit,

And we understand that this activity is irreversible,

in a way that we very often describe as the Spirit coming to dwell in us permanently.

And I think this is where Paul is taking his readers here in Verse 9.

There are various reasons to believe that these people really are Christians, and Paul is reminding them, or teaching them if they did not already realize it, that being really Christian, means being really **different** in a sense so radical we can only describe it as having been translated from death to life and having God, Himself, the Holy Spirit move in permanently to live in you!!

This is pretty exciting stuff, and pretty reassuring.

Verse 10 Continues

(Verse 10)

But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

To say that “*Christ is in you,*” is to say that the Spirit of Christ is in you.

The Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit....these are one and the same.

Having read more than seven chapters into Paul’s letter to the Romans, we don’t need any help to understand what is meant by the “*body being dead because of sin.*”

Every human body --- believer and non-believer alike --- is already dying and soon enough will be dead because of sin.

This has always been the human condition. Everyone who has ever been born into this world has been born into sin and destined to die fairly quickly!

Jesus was a special case insofar as he was wholly man but **also** wholly God and, therefore able to live his life without sin.

But even Jesus died, and it is especially important to remember that.

Because Jesus rose from the dead, and everything depends on that!

Verse 11 continues

(Verse 11)

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

We **get** this very important point, don't we?!

If we are **truly** Christian, then the same Spirit who raised **Jesus** from the dead lives in **us** also, and will also **raise** us from the dead.

This is our **hope**.

Not **only** that we will be reborn unto life **everlasting**,

but that we will be reborn unto a life that is **qualitatively** different,

the life that **God** lives

and since this life is **already** ours according to the **promise**,

what do **we** care about the things of the flesh?!

and why should we fear **death**?

Its all good! From here on out!

Closing Prayer